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BY

LADY M. MAJENDIE

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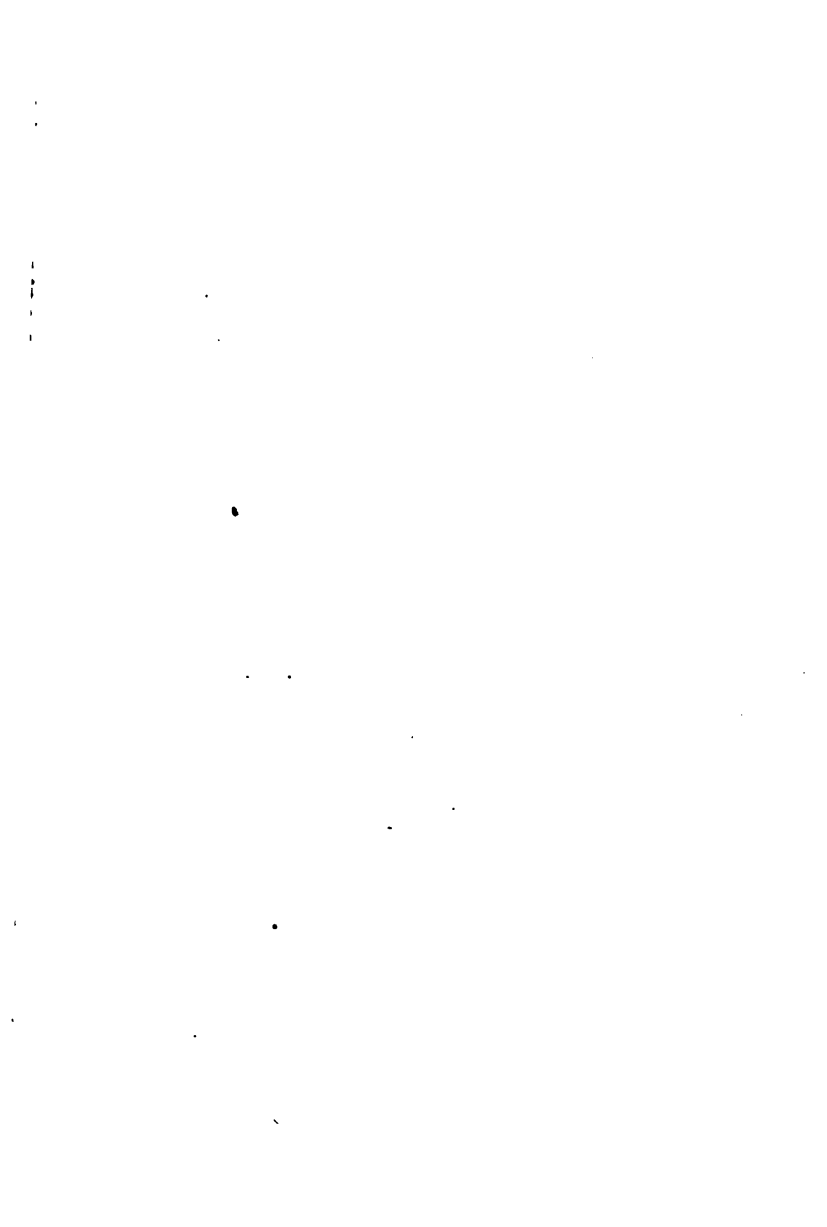
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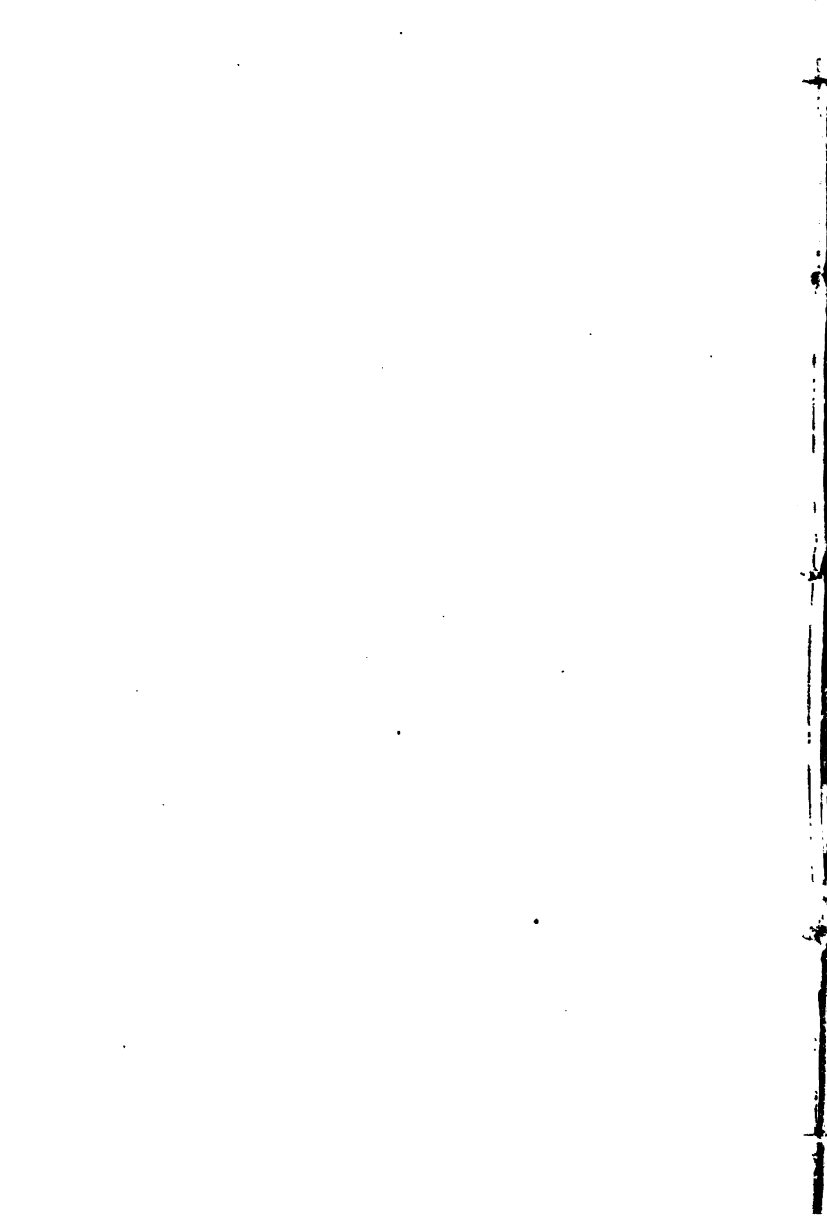
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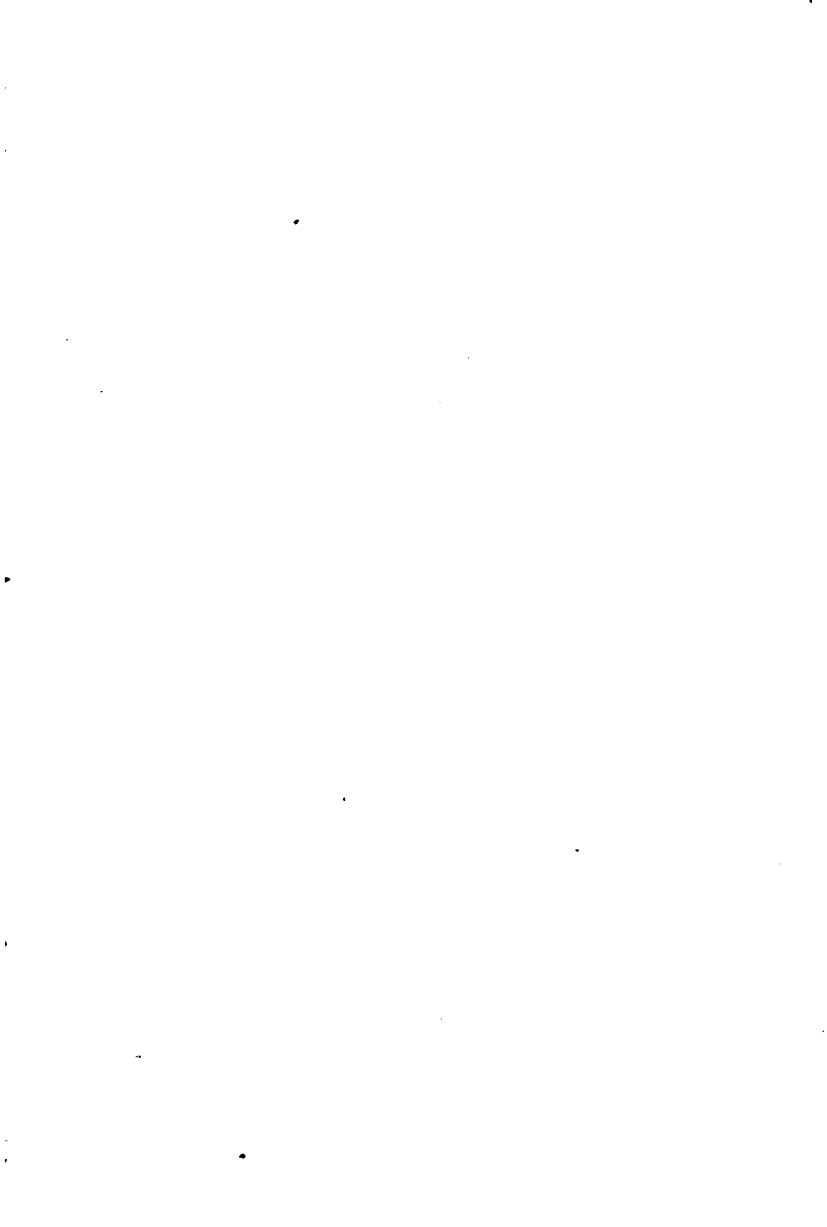
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# D I T A

BY *(Elizabeth)*

LADY MARGARET MAJENDIE

AUTHOR OF "GIANNETTO"

"This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever  
Ran on the green-sward; nothing she does, or seems,  
But smacks of something greater than herself;  
Too noble for this place."—*Winter's Tale.*



NEW YORK  
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1877

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1877. Nov. 10,

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# D I T A.

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## CHAPTER I.

“**H**OOT, man! wake up, Minister! Canna ye wake for ance in your life, Minister! Mr. Malcolm! ye’re speired for frae Dunmo-naigh!” Master Malcolm Farquhar was in bed, and, wearied by two long sermons—for it was the evening of Sunday—he siept soundly.

The wind roared round the bleak little manse, and the rain deluged the windows, sweeping down the valley with a hissing sound; but the noise had no power to wake the weary minister. Kerenhappuch, the honest servant, who formed the whole domestic household of the manse, was fain to take him by the shoulders, and give him such a shake as could not fail to rouse him.

“There,” she said, stopping to get back her breath, as she saw the gleam of returning consciousness in Master Malcolm’s blue eyes. “Ye’re ill to waken, Minister!”

“What’s the matter now, Huppie?” he said, rousing himself, and sitting up.

“Matter! there’s matter eneugh! Here’s

Willie come down frae Dunmonaigh—my Lady Grisel's speiring for ye, and she says ye maun come awa' down as fast as ye can win."

"But what can it be? are they ill? can you not tell me?"

"You'll just pit on your bit duds, Meenister; I'll no be telling ye till ye're nigh upon ready."

Knowing that to argue with his housekeeper was but waste of time, the Minister rose from his bed, and began to dress himself in haste, in great anxiety. He would willingly have continued the conversation through the closed door; but to his imploring repetition of "What will it be, Huppie? has anything terrible happened?" Huppie vouchsafed no response whatever, and he could only hasten the more.

When fully dressed, he emerged from his room, a strong, hale man of fifty, with a kind but rugged countenance, his gray hair brushed back under a Glengarry bonnet, and a stout stick in his hand.

Huppie stood waiting, holding a lantern, and with her shawl pinned tightly over her head.

"You'll not be coming with me, Huppie," said Master Malcolm; "it's a wild, rough night!"

Huppie tossed her head, and led the way out into the darkness. The first blast of wind, as they left the shelter of the house made both stagger back, and it was not till they reached a place where the path was sheltered by trees, that Kerenhappuch found her tongue.

"There's been a terrible accident doun at Dunmonaigh," she said, "and the young laird has been brought hame mair dead than alive.

Yon Willie (useless carle!) says that there's nae hope noo but in the mercy of God, for ilka bane in the puir lad's body is broken."

"God help him! how did it happen?"

Again Kerenhappuch was forced to pause, overpowered by the gust of wind and rain which met them as they turned a corner: then she went on—

"It's all Maister Ewan's fancy for yon wild brute that Willie had christened Beelzebub. The laird himsel wouldna ride him, I'm tauld; but Maister Ewan must aye be doing what nae ither body wad dream of; and this morning——"

"This morning, the Sabbath!" groaned the Minister.

"This morning he must up, when ither decent folks were at the kirk, and awa' to Strathluan, where he goes maist days; and he rode Beelzebub."

"Hush, Huppie!"

"I maun use the brute's lawfu' name," said Huppie, obstinately. "He couldna have left Strathluan three miles behind him, when doun comes the rain, and the wind gars the rain fly in Beelze—— in the black horse's eyes; and Willie, wha saw the young laird pass by to his death, says that nae power on earth could gar him stop; he was mad wi' fury and rage, and doun Monaigh hill they came; and the black horse had the bit in his teeth, and he lookit neither to right nor to left, but awa' doun the road to the loch."

"God be merciful to us!" said the Minister.

"Ay, maister, ilka drop of blood froze in Wil-

lie's body, for he saw what maun come. Maister Ewan held on like the deil himsel, and he might hae stoppit ony ither horse but yon at the corner. As they passed, Willie gaed siccan a skriech that ye couldna tell what it might be, and the young laird gied him ae look as he passed, with his hands weel down, and grasping the black horse's mane; but when he was come to the dyke, he loosed his twa hands suddenly, and struck hard wi' whip and spur. Weel, Willie saw his thocht, to gar the black horse loup ower the dyke and awa' into the loch; but wae's me! it is steep, and he couldna stop for the loup. He struck his broad chest on the dyke, and awa' they went thegither, till ye couldna tell whilk was the man and whilk was the beast, till they stoppit half in and half out of the water; and the black horse had broken his back, and the young laird was mair like to a corpse than a living man."

"Pray God he may yet be alive!" cried Master Malcolm, hastening his steps almost to a run.

"Not that gate, Minister!" cried Huppie, interrupting him, as he turned down the narrow road leading to the loch.

"Ye'll no cross the loch the night?"

"I must do so—it takes two miles off the road; there is no time to lose."

"But it's a fearsome night!"

"I know every stone in the loch, so do not be afraid, Huppie; it is not the first time I have crossed at night."

They were descending the path which led abruptly to the edge of the mountain lake, on

the northern shore of which stood Dunmonaigh Castle. They could say no more, for their words were unheard in the whistling and howling of the wind.

It was a good fortune that made the moon shine out for one moment, uncertain and wavering, struggling and wading through heavy clouds, but giving sufficient light to enable Master Malcolm to draw the boat out of a sheltering hole in the rock, and begin to unloose the oars.

Huppie, whose nerves were roused to the highest pitch of excitement, now suddenly uttered a scream.

"What's that, Maister Malcolm—what's that?" she cried, trembling.

Down the path they had just quitted, they perceived a figure running swiftly after them.

"It is some one who needs our help," said the Minister, severely. He hated unreasonable fears, and he went a few steps back to meet the new-comer.

"If you are a Christian, as you are a human being, help me in my need!" cried a voice through the darkness, the sound of which Master Malcolm recognized.

"Assunta!" he said; "you here? at this hour?"

"Is it you? ah, be merciful! take me to Dunmonaigh; there are yet two miles by the road, and they tell me he is dying!" Her voice rose almost to a scream.

"Get in and seat yourself," said the Minister, gravely; and taking the oars, he began to row out into the lake.

Assunta cowered down into the bottom of the



boat, folding more closely in her arms the little child she carried.

"Assunta," said the Minister, solemnly, "is it well that you should be here now?"

"Alas! signore, to say farewell—*Maria santissima*, help me!" she cried, wildly.

The Minister said no more. The wind lashed the loch up with a restless, surging movement, and it needed all his attention to row safely to land.

Lights flitted backward and forward through the long, dark passages of Dunmonaigh; backwards and forwards hurried bewildered and terrified servants; but in the sick-chamber all was profoundly still, except for the deep-drawn breathing of the dying man.

The little group were gathered around him of his nearest of kin—Lady Grisel, his mother, who tended him with a rigid countenance, all her life's lessons in self-control now summoned to her aid; beside her, her second son Angus, whom she loved far better than hapless Ewan.

Angus's face was strange, so dire were the conflicting passions that altered its expression from moment to moment as his keen blue eyes were fixed on his dying brother. Angus should have been the eldest son—all agreed in that; his was the clear intellect, the power of organization, the steady self-respect. Poor Ewan was the ne'er-do-weel, full of heart and affectionate, but self-willed, weak, and extravagant. Was the birthright to be his at last? Was fortune to smile on Angus, the dearly-prized inheritance to fall to him, hitherto a penniless younger son?

Was he on the eve of possessing all, heir of the almost feudal power Macmonach inherited with his blood. Angus strove hard to pray that his brother might yet be spared, but too long had he yielded to envy and covetous longings to resist the tempter now, and his lips would not frame the words, and his heart would not utter the lie.

Lady Grisel moved to and fro, and moistened her son's lips with brandy, and the doctor sat with his finger on his pulse, waiting till the deep-drawn breaths should grow slower and fainter.

There came a soft knock at the door, and Lady Grisel opened it noiselessly. "The Minister is come," said a whispering voice, and Lady Grisel went out to him, and closed the door behind her.

The great door and entrance to Dunmonaigh opened on to the mainland, but a small side or postern door in the great hall opened on to the loch, and from this half-a-dozen steps descended into the water; here the boats unladed and were fastened to large iron rings in the wall.

Master Malcolm had fastened his boat, and by the light of the lantern which Kerenhap-puch held up at arm's-length standing in the stern, he half supported, half carried Assunta up the steps and into the hall.

The Minister took off his great cloak, throwing it on a stool, from which, before long, the water with which the garment was saturated streamed on to the floor.

The hall was but dimly lighted by two brass

lamps which stood on the great stone chimney-piece, and Assunta, faint with cold and terror, shrank into the shadow thrown by the wide mantel-shelf, so that when Lady Grisel passed into the hall, she only perceived the tall figure of the Minister and Kerenhappuch who stood by the postern.

"You have come to a bed of death, Master Malcolm," she said, and her voice sounded cold and passionless.

"Ay, Lady Grisel, God help the poor lad through the valley of the shadow of death—I am come to pray by him and with him."

Lady Grisel shook her head, and her hands clasped each other tightly.

"Too late," she said; "before another hour is past, he will be called to give an account of his stewardship."

A look almost of displeasure crossed the Minister's gentle face, as he said, "God is merciful!"

She turned toward the door, and motioning with her hand that he should follow her, led the way.

Assunta started up and followed them swiftly with the child in her arms.

"Ewan, the Minister has come to you," said Lady Grisel, bending over her dying son. "Have you no word of repentance?"

She held the candle full in his dimmed sight, she spoke loud, but there came no response except the labored breathing—no movement of the half-shut eyelids.

"He shouldna be vexed, Leddy Grisel," said

the doctor, tenderly; "man canna help him the noo;" and he moistened the white lips again.

Noiselessly Assunta had stolen to the door, but now she burst from Huppie's hands, who would fain have held her back, and, throwing her shawl back from her face, she rushed forward to the side of the dying man. She threw herself on her knees, and the agony of her voice filled the astonished bystanders with momentary awe.

"Ewan! Ewan! it is I! Speak to me! look up, my own! Ewan, I have brought my child—look up, my heart! my treasure! it is I—ah, speak to me!"

"Take her away," said Lady Grisel's stern voice, and she looked to the Minister and the doctor, but neither moved. Assunta had laid her child on the pillow; she leant over the dying man, and her cry rose louder than ever—

"Ewan! once more—one word—you never say me nay—look at me—speak to me—only one word! God! oh God, have pity!"

"Take her away," repeated Lady Grisel, hoarsely, then suddenly started back, for Ewan Macmonach's eyes opened wide, his broken arms were useless, but by the mighty strength which had made him famous on the countryside, he raised himself in bed, and said loudly—

"Mother! Assunta, my——" No more: the false strength left him and he fell back. Huppie, who had crept in, caught Assunta in her arms and pressed her to her breast. Lady

Grisel knelt down till the death-struggle ceased.

“Lord, help now Thy servant, as he passeth through the valley of the shadow of death.” Even as the words of the Minister ceased, they saw that it was over.

## CHAPTER II.

ONE by one they withdrew, drawing back as those draw back who feel that their work is finished. The unfortunate Assunta remained kneeling by the bed, clinging frantically to the clothes, to the hand they would have removed from her grasp.

"Take her away," whispered Lady Grisel again, and this time Master Malcolm obeyed. The child, still an infant, began to wail; Lady Grisel started at the sound, but the mother gave it no heed: Kerenhappuch took it from the bed.

The doctor and the Minister raised Assunta to her feet, her eyes still fixed; they undid one by one the clinging fingers; they carried rather than led her to the door, where sense forsook her, and she fell insensible to the ground.

The two men laid her on a settle in the hall, and the doctor knelt down beside her and chafed her cold hands.

Lady Grisel sat down by the fire. The wind was howling, and the rain beating outside. Angus came and stood by his mother: he was deadly pale. There was a profound silence, the clock ticking heavily, and the doctor's movements sounded loud and distinct.

At last Lady Grisel rose: she put her hand

on the Minister's arm and drew him aside. "Alas!" she said, "disgrace as well as grief has fallen on Dunmonaigh."

"Lady Grisel," said Master Malcolm, solemnly, "I believe her to be his wife."

"You know not what you say, Master Malcolm," she answered; "Ewan Macmonach was never married."

"Ewan never was a villain," said the Minister, firmly. "Man and boy have I known the lad, and his heart was as true as steel, and he was the soul of honor."

"That girl his wife!" cried Lady Grisel—"the daughter of an Italian adventurer, a stranger to us and not of our creed,—would you——"

"Ewan!" that faint imploring voice came from the settle; consciousness had returned to Assunta: one wild look from her great dark eyes, and she staggered to her feet.

Lady Grisel turned to the fire, and away from the unhappy girl. Terrible was that return to consciousness; moans burst from her lips, and her hands were wrung together; she crossed the room and threw herself on her knees before his mother.

"Has he told you?" she cried; "has he acknowledged me and our child? He was all I had in the wide, wide world, and he is gone. I am his wife, lady—his own wife—and he is dead. Have pity on me—have pity on his child—I am Ewan's wife!"

Lady Grisel for one moment turned and stooped over the unhappy girl, but started, for

she felt Angus's cold hand on her shoulder, and heard him whisper—

“Mother, say nothing—do nothing: this claim must be proved.”

“Yes,” said Lady Grisel, turning to the Minister. “If she can prove it, Master Malcolm, bring her to me as my son's wife—till then, will you care for her?”

“Hear me, lady!” cried Assunta, once more; “you will not cast us out. It is not for myself, it is for Ewan's child; Ewan is mine—my husband—and you are his mother.”

Lady Grisel drew her gown gently from the poor girl's grasp and rose from her seat; Assunta fell forward with her face hidden on the chair.

Again Lady Grisel would have spoken, but once more Angus interposed—“Come away, mother,” he said; and turning to the Minister, added, “These ravings are most painful and unseemly, Master Malcolm; may I beg of you to remove this girl?”

The Minister bowed, and approached with a look of deep sadness.

“Come, my poor child,” he said—“come home with me; to-morrow we will talk of these things.”

She rose up at his words, looking blindly round her and clinging to his hand. He led her toward the door; then she stopped, and pressing her hands on her heart, she said—

“Stop, Padre, I have forgotten my child.”

Kerenhappuch brought her the little one, and the Minister wrapped a great plaid round them both. He opened the door and looked



out on the lake ; the water surged sullenly up and down, but the moon had struggled through wild, broken clouds, and edged them with fitful light. Kerenhappuch unfastened the boat, and now took the oars herself; slowly the Minister followed, supporting Assunta, and with a strong thrust Huppie rowed off into the loch ; then Assunta looked back, and she threw up her arms to heaven, uttering one agonized cry. At that sound Lady Grisel came out on the steps, and stood watching the boat making its slow way over the black water, and through the sound of the wind and rain she could hear the wailing of the little child.

Then she returned to her son, and they were alone. Lady Grisel put her hand on his arm, and looked into his face—

“You believe nothing of all this, mother?” said Angus, restlessly.

Lady Grisel sat down, and rested her brow on her hand—

“What can I say, Angus?” she said.

“You cannot believe it ; on the very face of it is falsehood.”

“Ewan was never false.”

He shook his head impatiently. “Why should he have deceived us by concealing his marriage? Tell me you do not believe it. Why, look you, mother, it cannot be true—it is quite impossible ; why do you not speak?”

“If it be true,” said Lady Grisel, “the proofs will be forthcoming: till then, Angus, let it rest.”

“But,” said Angus, faltering for one moment, “if it should be true?”

"Then the child of this strange woman will be the heir."

"It must be proved to be a lie: mother, why do you not say it is impossible?"

For one moment her self-command gave way and she wrung her hands.

"Why, Angus, do you ask me why I say nothing? Because I see nothing on any side but sorrow and trouble, disappointment or dire disgrace; I can bear no more now," and she left the room.

Angus paced up and down—he could not be still. Was the golden cup just placed to his lips to be dashed thence by cruel fortune? It was hard, bitterly hard: his teeth ground together, and the drops stood on his brow as the thought pressed on him that it might be true; his very knowledge of his brother's headstrong but honorable nature added to his fears. What did that dying effort mean when all effort had seemed impossible? Angus's dread grew more and more; he could scarcely suppress the agitation which swelled his breast almost to bursting. He had so longed for the wealth so lavishly spent by his brother; it had seemed to him to be the only thing worth having, the key to power, the stepping-stone of ambition—and it had been so nearly within his grasp. When the men had brought poor Ewan home to die, Angus had striven hard for a natural feeling of grief. He had knelt beside his brother and held his hand and listened to each groan, telling himself that they pierced his heart, that they were agony to him; and when the doctor pronounced his ver-

dict, he mistook the tears that rose to his eyes for genuine grief. But the heart knoweth its own bitterness; and the tears he was shedding now—the unmanly tears drawn by the intense irritation of suspense and disappointment—were a thousand times more genuine.

The morning had begun to dawn, and the cold blue light shone in on the deserted rooms; all the servants were gone to bed save the watchers in the death-room, when Lady Grisel stole down once more to gaze on the face of the dead. The women drew back when she entered and left her alone; the dreary light filled the room, and outside the wind had sunk to a whispering moan.

Lady Grisel stood looking on her son, and visions passed before her, not of the marble form on which she gazed, but of what once had been; of blue eyes gleaming with youth and strength—of yellow curly hair—of the tall, stalwart figure, the first in hurling the stone, the truest shot, the keenest sportsman, the idol of his men, and now how still! Had she ever loved him as he should be loved? Old days came back to her mind, her husband bending over the boy bidding him dry his tears, for his mother should not chide him, and she saw books and tasks flung aside, and father and son away to the mountains, both untaught and unlettered, but bright and beautiful and strong:—could it then be strange that her disappointed ambition should turn from these and center on clever, industrious Angus?

These visions fled, and she saw only the

closed eyes, the still brow, and knew that her son was dead.

What was this feeling rising in her breast? She turned away with clasped hands—she must go—anywhere away—for she felt that within her was a feeling that, were it not mightily suppressed, would rise up into an uncontrollable agony.

Sometimes when in life one is denied the power of inspiring love, Death, cruel or kind, comes in, bringing retribution in his hand: the living man dies, and from his ashes Death creates a love that is all agony, and so avenges him.

Angus was at the door when she came out, and she put her hand into his that he might lead her away, her heart yearning for sympathy. As they went together, one of the women touched Angus's arm, and held out something to him. It was his brother's signet-ring. A strange feeling made him shiver from head to foot as he placed it on his finger.

## CHAPTER III.

ASSUNTA had placed herself and her child unhesitatingly in the hands of worthy Master Malcolm, and with the true charity of his kindly nature, he took in the friendless woman, housed and fed her, and ministered to her broken spirit. Till the funeral of the young laird should be over, he would not question or disturb her; and indeed she seemed to be in no wise capable of answering questions, but sat with vacant eyes, bending over her child, and rocking herself to and fro; but when that solemn day had passed by, the Minister judged it best to hear Assunta's story before inquiries were made from Dunmonaigh.

Assunta de' Caroli was the only child of an unfortunate political refugee. While she was still a little child, Leone de' Caroli had been forced to flee from his native country with her and her young mother: the latter fell an easy victim to the colder climate of the north of Scotland, whither motives of economy and the necessity for secrecy had induced them to come, and Assunta was left to the sole guardianship of her father. She adored him; she entered fully into the wild political schemes he formed in his imaginative brain; she aided him in a

thousand secret correspondences, all of which, one after another, crumbled away to be replaced immediately by still more secret and extravagant plans. De' Caroli's family was noble, but impoverished like himself by political intrigue, so the exile and his child were at times in actual need.

In the midst of this poor and half-fed life, Assunta grew up and developed into a lovely girl. Her education had not been neglected, for her father was a well-read man, but it had been careless and desultory. She was fond of wandering in the woods which covered the hills at the back of the town of Strathluan; she loved the scent of the fir-trees and the crimson heather; and here one day she met with Ewan Macmonach, his gun on his shoulder, surrounded by dogs; and again and again would Ewan return, and the dogs grew to know her so well, that they would leap and fawn on her as she came up the path; and when yellow-haired Ewan and dark-eyed Assunta walked slowly through the heather, the timid deer rejoiced, for they were safe.

Sometimes De' Caroli would join them, but oftener they were alone and entertained each other well.

One day Ewan told Lady Grisel that he had set his heart on making Assunta his wife: her displeasure was indescribable. She was a stern Presbyterian; her horror of the "idolatry of Rome" was one of the strongest feelings of her religion.

Ewan was not learned, was less clever than other men, simple in his tastes, throwing away

money foolishly, acting on impulse, loving the free open air, and the exercise of his herculean limbs: he could neither plead nor argue; his mother's bitter words and opposition hurt him—her threatened curse disarmed him. Ewan loved peace, and in his bewildered grief he entreated Assunta to assent to a private marriage, only to be secret for a while, a short while, till he should have brought his mother to listen to his suit. Assunta loved him too dearly to refuse. Love of mystery was one of the curses of De' Caroli's character: he knew that his health was failing; it was all-important to him that his daughter should be provided with a home—and he promised that if they would leave all arrangements to him, it should be accomplished with perfect secrecy, and without delay.

A very few weeks after his daughter's marriage the exile died, and Assunta was not left desolate.

A whole year elapsed, and still Ewan had not told his mother, and Assunta was so happy with the husband she loved, that she cared nothing for the life of perfect seclusion she led, and asked for no more. In the pride of his youth and strength, Ewan was cut down, and Assunta found herself left, at nineteen years old, a widow and alone.

It was with an anxious and sad heart that Master Malcolm begged Assunta to tell him what she could about her marriage.

"It is all-important, my child," he said; "more important than perhaps you think—it affects so many."

"Not so much as it would have done if baby

had been a boy," said Assunta, leaning her head wearily on her hand.

"Boy! he is not a boy!" cried Master Malcolm, in the greatest astonishment.

"No; she is a little lassie," said Assunta, sadly.

"Alas! alas!" he cried, "all the lands of Dunmonaigh to go to a girl; oh! why was she not a boy?"

"It is best so," said Assunta, "for now it will only be to give her money, and Angus Macmonach will still be the laird."

Master Malcolm shook his head sorrowfully. "Not so," he said; "all, everything goes to the heir, be he male or female."

"I did not know," faltered Assunta.

She gave into the hands of the Minister a desk in which Ewan had been wont to keep a few treasures, which she had sent for from Strathluan.

"Here Padre—Master Malcolm I mean—in here you will find my proofs."

The Minister turned the rusty little key in its lock, and opened the desk. The contents were motley enough. Two gorgeous salmon-flies, a roll of wire, all unraveled and twisted about everything else. There was a packet marked in Ewan's school-boy hand, "Letters from Assunta." There was a child's india-rubber ring; and quite in the back, a roll of papers done up tightly and fastened round with a green ribbon, the knot of which was carefully sealed. A bunch of labels was fastened to the seal. The Minister took them and read them one by one.



"Attested copy of marriage certificate, taken from half-burnt register, after the burning of St. Agnes's." The next—"Baptismal certificate of Margaret Griselda." Both were dated. The third simply—"My will."

"What does this mean?" said the Minister. "In what church were you married?"

"In the Roman Catholic chapel at Strathochie, which was burnt down last year."

"And the registers were destroyed. Is the clergyman who married you to be found?"

"Alas, no!" answered Assunta, the tears streaming from her eyes; "he died about a month after the baptism of the child. He was a dear friend to me."

"Who were witnesses of the ceremony, my poor child?"

"My father."

"Dead also," muttered the Minister; "and who else?"

"The sacristan of St. Agnes's—he has left Strathochie now."

The Minister looked very grave. "What would you have me to do?" he said; "shall I open these papers and make an examination of them? I will act according to your wishes."

"No," answered Assunta. "When Ewan put them there, he said they were meant for his mother's hands. I would rather that no one but Lady Grisel should break the seal. Do you believe my story, Master Malcolm?" she cried, suddenly. "You do believe me? Will you help me?"

"I do—I believe it all. The young laird

was very dear to me," he said, passing his hand across his eyes; "I never knew him deceive man, woman, or child—the only gift he inherited from my Lady Grisel; but, alas! this has been a mad concealment. Do not fear, I believe you, my child;" and he laid his hand on the young widow's shoulder, and therewith heaved a deep sigh. Was not Presbyterian nature woful at this Papist alliance?

Assunta cared not for the sigh; she impulsively kissed the hand of the Minister, who withdrew it hastily.

"We must give these papers to Lady Grisel," he said. "You shall accompany me to Dunmonaigh to-morrow, that she may open them in our presence with all formality."

"To-morrow! so soon!" cried Assunta, shrinking.

"It should be done at once; meantime, for safety, they had best be left in my drawer; that is but a feeble guard for so precious a packet," he said, looking at poor Assunta's little leather desk.

"It will be safer there," she answered, looking at the strong wooden table; and she returned up stairs to her little child, her one comfort and help in this dark hour of her life.

The Minister sat by his table, with his head leaning on his hand, wrapped in melancholy thought. The drawer was open, and as his eyes fell on the packet, he sighed more heavily than ever. "It will be a terrible blow to Lady Grisel," he reflected. "It will almost crush her—for I cannot doubt this story."

He sat thus when the door opened, and Kerenhappuch announced "Mr. Angus, Minister," and Angus Macmonach walked in. His look was so disturbed, and his face so pale, that Master Malcolm did not notice his omission of customary salutation. He sat down, and rushed with painful eagerness into the subject of his visit.

"Well, Mr. Malcolm," he said, "this story is all a lie, is it not? Is the girl still here? You shall be no loser by your charity. We will do what we can to help her——"

"Hold," said the Minister, gravely; "this is a graver matter than you wot of. I believe in her story."

Angus began to pace up and down. "Believe in it, Minister! a man of sense and experience like yourself to give credit to so transparent an imposture! you do not do yourself justice."

"I have known this girl and her father for many years; they are no impostors, but well-born gentlefolks—albeit Papists," he added, below his breath.

"But—Ewan——"

"Your brother never did a dishonorable action, nor told a lie in his life," interrupted the Minister.

"Pshaw!" said Angus, impatiently. "What means have you of knowing?"

"But I have papers by me."

"Papers!" cried Angus, eagerly. "They are not proofs?"

"They are here," said the Minister, and he proceeded to read the labels aloud.

"Give me that packet—I have a right to open and examine it."

"Not so," said Master Malcolm, replacing the packet in the drawer and turning the key. "No one may touch them but Lady Grisel, your mother, and that in presence of Mistress Macmonach and myself."

Then Angus swore a violent oath: the Minister's face grew pale with displeasure.

"Angus Macmonach," he said, "no evil words will undo what is done."

Angus flung himself into a chair.

"Would the girl hear of a compromise?" he asked.

"You can ask her," said Master Malcolm. "But no! do not so insult her."

"You have no pity for me," cried Angus, suddenly changing his tone. "You think only of this upstart woman and her child, who would ruin my dearest hopes."

"I do pity you, Angus," said the Minister, "and would give the best years of my life that this had never been; but justice must be done, though to see a Papist in your mother's place, would go near to break my heart."

"It must not, it shall not be!" cried Angus. "I will offer her money—anything rather than that."

"You must not while the matter is still uncertain; that were the worst course you could take."

"Would to heaven that it were uncertain!" said Angus, and ere the words had left his lips, he repented of them: again he paced up and

down. The Minister began to wonder where this would end, when, unwittingly of who was within, Assunta entered the room.

Seeing Angus, she stood still, clasping her child, her large eyes fixed upon him, and in her whole manner and mien were a dignity and innate nobleness for which he was not prepared; but it was life or death to him, and he would not spare her.

The Minister shrank back as though he were guilty; he could not bear to see the shaft wing its way home in that quivering heart.

"Madam," said Angus, and his voice was low, each word dropping with a cruel distinctness—"Lady Grisel and myself are desirous of knowing how much money will induce you to withdraw your claims."

Assunta looked at him, and as the meaning of his words slowly entered her mind, every trace of color receded from cheek and lips, leaving her white as marble. She deigned no answer, but he heard the click of her small teeth together. Angus never forgot the look she gave him; and she turned and left the room.

To her dying day she spoke to no one of that scene, but she went down to the kitchen, and putting down her child, she took hold of Kerenhappuch's hands.

"Huppie," she said—"Huppie!" and so fell into a violent fit of trembling and shivering, lying cold as ice, with chattering teeth, for hours.

"So you will not let me see those papers?"

were Angus's last words as he quitted the Minister's house.

"To-morrow you shall all see them, and doubts will be set at rest," answered Master Malcolm; and Angus went home yet more anxious than he came.

## CHAPTER IV.

**I**N Dunmonaigh old-fashioned laws were kept, and by half-past ten every inmate of the house was in bed, and the doors barred and chained; but on the night of the day after Ewan Macmonach's funeral, some one was stirring even at midnight.

The night was very fine. The loch lay like a sheet of silver in the light of the moon; there was not a ripple on its surface—not a cloud on the purple sky.

Secretly and softly as a thief in the night, Angus Macmonach opened the little door, descended the steps to the boat, and pushed off into the silent loch. Each little splash, as the oars touched the water and dashed back glittering showers, struck him as unnaturally loud, but not a light shone in the windows of the old house; black and silent rose the tower, the numerous turrets and battlemented walls, and high up hung sullenly half-mast high the great flag.

Swiftly flew the little boat: Angus's foot touched the opposite shore, and wrapping his plaid round his breast, he mounted the hill.

In the manse all likewise slept—Assunta with her child in her arms, worn out with weeping and sorrow. No one heard stealthy movements below. The manse was never barred nor locked up at night. "There are no robbers here," Master Malcolm would say; "and should robbers come, here is nothing to rob:" so without let or hindrance Angus found himself alone in the Minister's room.

It was bitterly cold, but he wiped the drops from his brow as he drew from his pocket a large bunch of keys and knelt down by the table. A great luminous star shone down on his deed, and throbbed in the cloudless sky: between him and the eye of God was no cloud or shadow to hide him.

He tried one key after another—would none fit? yet the lock was a common one. Another and yet another; at last, with a loud crack which made Angus vibrate from head to foot, the lock flew back and the packet was before his eyes. Quickly and softly he unrolled its folds by the light of the gleaming moon; he took out the precious papers; he thrust in blank sheets instead; retied the green ribbon and labels. Angus must strike a light: how loud the match sounded! it thrilled him through and through. All had been thought of—the red wax was pressed down, and he bent over and sealed it anew with his brother's ring.

The baby moved restlessly in her sleep, and Assunta pressed her closer, half opening her weary eyes.

"Hush, hush, darling! sweet little one,



sleep! God watches over the fatherless and widow."

Swiftly the little boat crossed the loch again, and there was no movement or light in the windows of Dunmonaigh.

## CHAPTER V.

ASSUNTA rose on the following day with the heavy weight on her heart of one about to go through a painful ordeal. She could scarcely touch the food Kerenhappuch placed before her; and as the time for their going to Dunmonaigh approached, she grew hourly paler and paler.

Early in the morning Master Malcolm had sent over a messenger to Lady Grisel asking her at what hour it would suit her to receive them, and the answer came that at mid-day would be best; so when the sun was rising high in the heavens they started together.

Assunta had need of the good Minister's arm, for never had road seemed so long or so rough. An unspoken feeling made Master Malcolm choose to go by the road rather than by the loch. It seemed to his simple mind that, humble as she might be, Ewan Macmonach's wife should enter her husband's home by its principal entrance with all dignity.

Long as the way seemed at first, Assunta thought it all too short when they stood before the great doors.

"Courage, my child—summon up all your courage," said her kind friend; and he rang the bell, which resounded through the house.

In one short moment they found themselves in the presence of Lady Grisel and her son.

They were sitting at the end of a long library; the blinds were still drawn, and the dark furniture of the room, with its tiers upon tiers of old books, gave it a gloomy aspect.

Lady Grisel rose from her seat when she saw them, and saluted them gravely. She was above the ordinary height, and moved with much dignity. Assunta's appealing eyes found no response in hers: she sought in them for sympathy, and could scarcely believe that she would find none; there was no gentleness in the beautiful, stern face of Ewan's mother, and the girl covered her face with her hands and stood silent.

Angus did not rise when they came in, but sat leaning back in his chair, studiously endeavoring to appear a mere spectator of the scene.

Lady Grisel desired both to be seated, and then leaning forward with one elbow on the table she began—

“Master Malcolm, in a matter of vital importance such as this is, we will lose no time in idle parley. I understand that you consider that you hold proofs of my son's marriage with this lady?”

The Minister bowed.

“This lady will not object,” resumed Lady Grisel, “to answering what questions I may see fit to make before we proceed to examine her papers?”

“No,” said Assunta, putting back the dark hair from her brow, and raising her face; “I will answer all that you ask me.”

"At what church did this ceremony take place?"

"At St. Agnes's Catholic chapel in Strathochie."

"And who were the witnesses?"

"My father and the sacristan."

"And they only signed the register?"

"They only."

"What day was this?"

"The tenth of September last year."

Lady Grisel glanced at a little memorandum-book she held in her hand and slightly started: she continued—

"And after the marriage did you return to Strathluan?"

"No, we went north into the hills to Glentyre."

Again Lady Grisel glanced at her book, and saw recorded a letter from Ewan, dated from Glentyre, whither, he said, he had gone for the purchase of dogs.

"Did my son make any purchases at Glentyre?" she asked.

"Yes; he bought Beaver and Raven, the two retrievers."

"How long did you stay there?"

"Till the thirtieth of that month; when Ewan returned, he said there were guests at Dunmonaigh."

Lady Grisel sat thinking.

"How old is your child?" she said, suddenly.

"Five months old."

"And what is her name?"

"Margaret Griselda."

A momentary flash of emotion passed over Lady Grisel's face as she heard her own name.

"This is vain talk after all," she said. "Give me the papers."

Assunta held out the roll, labeled, and bound with its green ribbon. She felt very faint, as though the room whirled round and round.

"No hand but yours should open it," she said. "Ewan trusted you, Lady Grisel, as he never could trust another."

Then she sat back watching the papers that held her fate, with clasped hands and blanched lips.

Angus rose suddenly and put his hand on the packet; he bent down, and examined it closely.

"That is without doubt my brother's seal," he said. "That is quite right;" and he slipped the ring from his finger, and placed it over the impression of the seal. Lady Grisel was about to open it, when once more he stopped her.

"Would it not be wiser and more just to this lady," he said, "that there should be independent witnesses to this transaction?"

Assunta bowed her head—she could scarcely speak. Lady Grisel seemed struck with what he said, and prayed Master Malcolm to ring the bell. It seemed as if the minutes were hours that elapsed before the butler and housekeeper and Lady Grisel's own woman stood together in a line, adding to the strangeness of the scene.

Lady Grisel's voice did not falter as she explained shortly—

"It is said that the laird was married, and

that this lady is his wife. In proof of this she has put into my hands these papers to be examined before witnesses;" and she read the labels aloud.

So great was the silence, that all started when the seal cracked and gave way; and slowly Lady Grisel unwound the green ribbon. One by one the labels unloosed, fluttered to the ground; with a loud rustle the paper unrolled. One glance of her eye was enough—they were blank paper. Still Lady Grisel turned them from side to side, and backward and forward. The Minister started up; a faint smile had come over the faces of the impartial spectators, and Angus gave a low, jarring laugh. Assunta had sat still with her head turned aside, and saw not the strange looks they were casting at her; but at the sound of the laugh she turned and rose to her feet.

Not yet did the cruel truth force itself on her belief; she spoke not, but went down on her knees on the ground, and scanned every sheet of the paper—up and down, inside and out—all was white and blank. Then she sprang to her feet with gleaming eyes; pushing back the clustering hair, and leaning against the wall, she stood with panting breath, as stands a noble young stag at bay.

At first no one spoke, but Master Malcolm stole gently to her side, and, would she have allowed it, would have drawn her hand through his arm.

Angus broke silence at last. "You see, mother," he said, "we were wise to invite wit-

nesses to attest these most binding proofs. You can go now," he said to the butler and the women; but Lady Grisel bade them stay, and she advanced a few steps toward Assunta, holding out her hand.

"Let all hear what I say," she said: "had I not seen these with my own eyes," and she pointed to the papers, "I could not have believed that son of mine could have been so base a villain."

"It is not so!" cried Assunta. "It is a lie! some one has deceived me! You his mother, who know well what he was, tell me it is not true! believe the evidence of your own heart! Ewan never deceived me! there has been some treachery here! O God! how shall I prove my husband's truth?"

Her words came forth with panting breath, and she pressed her hands on her heart, to control the violence of its beating.

As Lady Grisel watched her, a burning flush of shame came over her face—shame for her son; she held out her hand again, and hot tears rose to her eyes.

"What can I do for you?" she said. "Would to heaven I had died ere I had seen this day!"

Assunta seized her hand tightly in both her own, which were burning, and she looked into Lady Grisel's face with a wild, imploring look.

"You are kind to me now," she cried. "Why have you changed to me? why do you look at me like that?" and she flung away the hand she held, and raising her arms, she cried—

"I swear by the God above us! by my dead

husband! by all we hold sacred in heaven or earth, that I am Ewan Macmonach's wife!"

One by one the servants had stolen away; Angus had again sunk into his chair, and was looking on very white, hiding his quivering lips with one hand.

The Minister laid his hand on Assunta's shoulder. "Come with me," he said.

"I am coming," she answered; and kneeling down, she gathered together all the papers and wound the ribbons and labels round them.

"These are all the justice that is for me," she said, and turned to the door.

With swift steps Lady Grisel followed her and caught her gown.

"Forgive," she said, faintly.

Assunta's whole face changed to an expression of deadly terror.

"Forgive!" she cried; "you ask me to forgive! Then it must be true! and he has been false to me! false as hell itself! and I am undone!" and she turned and fled from the house—fled along the road as if terror and anguish had lent her wings.

"Oh, follow her! follow her, Master Malcolm!" cried Lady Grisel. "All that I can I will do for her and her child: you will be their friend?"

As the Minister went out, Lady Grisel bent her head and wept more bitter tears than she had done over the burying of her first-born son.

When Master Malcolm reached home, he found Kerenhappuch waiting for him at the door.



"So he's deceived the puir lass, Master Malcolm!" she cried; "I couldna hae believed that siccan a bonny lad could hae so black and fause a heart. She's daft wi' the news, puir body."

The Minister shook his head sorrowfully.

"I take it, it was a' a pretense, Minister—the marriage and a'?"

"Ay, Huppie, never was woman so cruelly deceived. What is she doing now?"

"She sits by the fire and doesna move, and she neither greets nor manes; her wits are clean gane."

"Poor soul—poor soul!" and the Minister went up to pray. He held it best to pray first and to strive to comfort by-and-by.

But in the night, when all were asleep, Assunta took her child in her arms and arose; she put bread in her pocket, and wrapped a plaid round the child and fled. Down the highroad she walked, and an unnatural strength seemed to bear her up.

For about ten yards the highroad hung over the loch. Assunta looked down into its quiet waters, so still and deep—and she clasped her child and thought of the rest, of the peace, under the cold water—escape for both from this cruel world; but the child opened her eyes, and Assunta moaned and went on her way. Some miles further on the road she would wait for the coach which would bear her thence, never to come back—never, never more.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE snow had fallen thick and fast, and all the ground round the manse lay under a white unbroken sheet.

The manse stood on the brow of a hill, bleak and very cold without, but it was so warmly thatched that it was comfortable enough within. The path which led up to the door had not been swept, and the deep snow impeded Lady Grisel's steps as she mounted the hill. Her face had grown older and more careworn during the two months that had elapsed since Ewan's death, and her eyes would often look fixed and troubled. The spirits of the past were often with her, and their faces were mournful, and their gestures reproachful, and she could not throw off the spell. As she slowly followed the path, they were pressing their old memories on her, and she longed for the healer Time to speed faster on his way—for another year to have driven them further back. There was no sweetness in their presence to her. She had not valued her husband and her eldest son as all around had done; she had felt herself to be strong and capable, and was full of ambition; and she was young when she married: her husband was rich, very handsome, and beloved by

all, and she looked for great things and found nothing. Horses and dogs were his delight; his business to see that all were happy and spoilt; his religion a simple and childlike faith. She had married an ideal, a creation of her own imagination, and the awakening made her think herself deceived. Her husband loved her dearly at first; but though he was neither clever nor brilliant, he saw that she was disappointed in him, and that she looked down upon him, soon ceasing to love him; but, self-absorbed, she never guessed that he too had to fight a battle with himself, generously hidden from her knowledge. Not till the day of his death did he show the hidden bitterness: when she was bending over him, he turned from her with a movement almost like a child's; he put his arms around Ewan's neck and kissed him, and said, "We two have loved each other," and so died, holding the lad's hand in his own.

Afterward, when she would fain have begun a new career for herself and her sons, she found that she was not so rich as she had thought, so much had drifted away—large loans to poor kinsfolk, rents forgiven and lowered, pensions, and bills backed for other men. Had she not been justified in her estimate of one so weak? Ewan had been just the same.

On Angus she had placed her hopes; he was clever and shrewd—he would some day do great things. But she was but a woman after all, and seeing the intense love that bound her husband and Ewan together, sometimes she felt a yearn-

ing for a little of such love, but Angus was too selfish, and she herself too reserved. When another year should have passed, the proportions of her life would again become true: had she been able she would have drunk deeply of the waters of Lethe. The Minister was sitting in his little room when Lady Grisel came in. He placed a chair for her by the low peat-fire and helped to remove her fur cloak.

"I am still very unhappy, my old friend," she began.

"Ah! the loss of such a son, Lady Grisel."

She waved her hand. "That was God's will, Master Malcolm," she said, "and must be borne: it is about Assunta that I have come to you," and the tears started to her eyes. "The older I grow," she said, "the more does the sadness of life strike me. God knows it is a very sad thing. We are endowed with ambition that we may see its disappointment, and may taste the bitterness of its defeat; we are given the power of passionate love, and it is misplaced, or denied, or transformed into anguish by bereavement. The golden apples of knowledge, like the Dead Sea fruit, turn to ashes between our teeth; our dearest friend may smile, and smile, and be a villain: we are struggling through a tangled and intricate web."

"Yes, Lady Grisel; but do not forget, the workmen work the tapestry of life from behind, weaving a thousand unpatterned threads: not till the work is consummated, not till heaven is reached, shall we see face to face that every man who has labored in the gigantic loom has done

his part in God's glorious design." Lady Grisel looked thoughtful.

"There are times when courage fails, Minister," she said.

"We walk by faith, and not by sight," he said very gently.

She was silent for one moment, then raising herself, she said—

"I am anxious about that poor girl."

"Have you heard from her, Lady Grisel?"

"Alas, no! it is not likely that she would write to me, after what she said to you in Edinburgh. You are sure of her address?"

"Quite sure; when I traced her there, she promised always to let me know where she was."

"Is she still in Edinburgh?"

"No, she has gone to London."

"To London! alone!" exclaimed Lady Grisel.

"She would not listen to me," he answered.

"Her one only wish and hope was to hide herself away from all who had ever known or seen her."

"Had she money, Master Malcolm?"

"She had some, but she would not tell me how much; it is useless to ask her to accept it, Lady Grisel—she will not."

"Alas! it is all I could do for her."

"I am thankful, dear lady, that you would be her friend."

"She was most basely deceived, Minister; it seems even now most hard to credit it."

"Alas!" said Master Malcolm, "who knoweth the wickedness of the human heart?"

"But I thought I knew him so well—I was deceived. And yet, strange to say, I cannot believe it, or give credit to the evidence of my own eyes—I cannot believe it."

The Minister grasped Lady Grisel's hand, and brushed away a tear.

"God knows," he said, "that had I one inch of ground on which to base my faith in Ewan's truth, I would proclaim it as a trumpet-peal to heaven."

"You say that all trace of the chapel is gone, the priest dead, the sacristan emigrated, and no one knows what has become of the register?"

"It is all too true."

"And her papers were all blank; it is useless to doubt longer?"

"What more can I do, Lady Grisel?"

Lady Grisel hesitated for a moment, then she put her hand lightly on the Minister's arm and said—

"I hardly like to propose it to you, but you are her only friend."

"Would you have me follow her to London?" said the Minister.

"I would; we know how utterly friendless she is; if she will not accept of money, there are a thousand ways in which we may help her still. You could find employment, fictitious employment from me if you will, to be doubly paid; but this can only be done when you are there, when you see whether she be driven to great straits or not. Perhaps her Italian relations may be willing to take her home; that would be best of all."

The Minister shook his head sadly.

"She would rather die than let them know what has befallen," he said. "I had not thought to find such a passionate, determined nature in one I had supposed so gentle. I would follow her with all my heart; but just now, having been to Edinburgh but a month ago, I have much business, and, truth to say——"

The Minister hesitated, and a blush spread itself over his hard-featured face; he could not acknowledge, even to so old a friend, that to make such a journey was far beyond his means: not a week before, Michael, the ne'er-do-weel of the village, had come back from prison, Master Malcolm fondly hoped, an altered man, and it had taken a round sum of money to start him afresh in a new and congenial trade; so in spite of Kerenhappuch's loud remonstrances and heavy sighs, the good man had had but little meat to his porridge of late.

"Truth to say," he hesitated, and patted his knees and rubbed back his rough gray hair.

"Then you will not go, and seek for this poor child?" said Lady Grisel, and there was somewhat of condemnation in her voice.

"It is not want of will," he began again; "but rather that at this moment other matters——"

Lady Grisel knew well the innate pride of the man with whom she was dealing, and the thought of the real reason flashed across her suddenly, but she was careful not to betray herself.

"Well, well," she said, "you must take your own way. The harvest has been so bad these

two years, Master Malcolm, that I fear there is much poverty abroad."

"Not so much," he answered, "for the winter is mild, and but few of the sheep have suffered."

"There is much poverty," she insisted. "And because I feel it so, Minister, I will desire you to spend forty pounds for me—not for the very poorest, but on such as your discretion shall judge to be most in need; nor would I confine my alms to the parish only, should there be any beyond its bounds."

Master Malcolm put out his hand and shook Lady Grisel's without a word. When she rose to go, she said softly—

"When will you start, Minister."

"To-morrow by daybreak. I will take the Strathluan mail."

Huppie was sweeping away the snow from the little path up to the house when Lady Grisel came out.

"Master Malcolm looks poorly to-day," she said kindly, as she passed the woman, and then Huppie's complaints burst out.

"He's no ill, my leddy—it's no that; but he eats no more than yon puir druckit hen," and she pointed to a miserable draggled fowl pecking about in the snow. "Never a morsel of meat has he touched, and I dinna ken when he will take till't again. He's gien awa' ilka bawbee we had to a ne'er-do-weel callant that will spend it a' in whisky and sneeshin, diel take him! and forgie me using siccan a word. Na, na—it's no that he is ill."



"Well, Kerenhappuch, if something should come up from Dunmonaigh, you will say that it was a very fine beef, and that I should be glad of Master Malcolm's opinion on it."

"Ay, thank you, my leddy."

"And are you well yourself, Huppie?"

"Ou ay, my leddy, I'm just in my frail ordinar."

As Lady Grisel went her way down the hillside, the kind smile on her face gave place to the look of care that had now become habitual to it. She met Angus on her way, and he turned and walked with her. His mind was full of new schemes and projects; he would spend his mornings over local maps, planning new roads and bridges, choosing tracts of moorland to redeem from the waste, and he now began to expound some new theory of drainage. But Lady Grisel could not give her mind to these things now, as she would have done once; for always between her and her rest was the haunting look of Ewan's blue eyes, and the thought of Assunta's despair.

Several times, craving for sympathy, she had spoken to Angus about Assunta, but he heard her with visible impatience, and with a troubled look, that she attributed to a sensitive horror of the disgrace that had stained his brother's name. To-day she began once more, but he interrupted her, irritably—

"Why tell me what I have no wish to hear?" he said, with his cane cutting off the heads of the bracken. She was distressed at his manner, and looking at him tenderly, she said—

"Are you not well, Angus?"

"I am all right," he answered, impatiently ;  
"but I am harassed and worried by all I have  
to do."

She said no more.

## CHAPTER VII.

THERE was a thick fog in London when Master Malcolm arrived, and it seemed to him that nothing could be more dreary. He put up at a little old-fashioned hotel to which he had been directed by a fellow-traveler,—a hotel smelling strongly of beer and bad tobacco.

He ate a badly-cooked meal placed on a small slate table in the common room, and then asked the careless, whistling waiter how far it was to Loam Street. The man declared it to be at least half an hour's drive in a cab; and when asked by Master Malcolm if a cab would be very expensive, laughed rudely in answering, and went out to tell his friends the good joke.

The cab was procured, the Minister being anxious to begin his work at once, though he was very weary from having traveled all through the night.

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, and the worst of the yellow fog was over, but the lamps were still lighted, and the damp trickled down all the walls and made the pavement shiny and greasy.

As they were crossing one of the thoroughfares, the cab-horse fell, and the poor, patient

Minister had to turn out into the mud and wet. In answer to his inquiries, he found that the horse had been out all night and was quite worn out—too much so to carry him as far as Loam Street. The cabman was touched by the kindness with which the Minister spoke to him, and bade him wait where he was and he would send him a cab, as it was often very difficult to find one in a London fog.

The Minister waited a long time, and he was chilled and pinched with cold, but he strode vigorously up and down.

There was a broad sweeping across the road at the corner, and in charge of it stood a little wistful street-sweeper with his broom under his arm. The Minister found himself watching the boy. Passengers hurried by so fast that no one paused to give him anything, though he ran backward and forward, keeping a clean, smooth way; and the pinched little face, prematurely old, grew whiter and smaller, and once it seemed to the Minister that it was quivering into tears. As he came up to the crossing, the boy only hung his head—he had given up hope.

"Here, my boy," said Master Malcolm, and he held out to him a real silver shilling. The little face brightened, and glowed with joy; he plied his broom vigorously, and poured a shrill, joyous whistle into the air.

The cab rattled up, and the boy flew to open the door. The Minister smiled at him, and said softly—

"Never say die, my laddie—the Lord will provide." Back went the boy to the crossing;

and on other rainy days—and heaven knows some days will be dark and dreary—the words of that man with the sweet smile, would come into his mind—"The Lord will provide."

The cab rattled on, over the stones. It seemed a long and weary time before it stopped and the man opened the door.

Master Malcolm's heart beat as he rang the bell. He had to wait some time before it was answered by a very shabby-looking woman, who looked sharply at him as if to inquire his business.

When asked whether Mrs. Carrol was there (for that was the name poor Assunta had assumed) the landlady informed him that she was gone—had not, in fact, stayed there more than a fortnight. The woman invited Master Malcolm in, and sitting down opposite to him, said she would answer anything he chose to ask, for she had taken a fancy to the poor young lady, and would be only too glad to hear of her welfare. She had been very ill there, the landlady said—delirious in her mind at first, and then so weak that she could not set foot to the ground; and before she was well enough to do so, she had insisted upon going, for she had to pay the doctor's bill, and her lodging, and she could no longer afford such lodgings, "which they are very good, though I say it that shouldn't," said the woman.

"She kissed me, she did," she continued, rubbing her eyes with the corner of her pocket-handkerchief, "and thanked me for all the trouble I had been at with the baby on my hands. She was a dear young lady."

"But can you tell me where she is gone?" said the poor Minister.

"Yes, I think I could; but I must think. It was Bill as took her box in a barrow, and whether it was 8 or whether it was 9, I am not sure; but a respectable street it was, and the lodging was kept by the first cousin of Mrs. Smith (that's our baker), and she married into the upholstering line, and took a nice house, and lets it cheaper than I can do, being a widow; and she went there, I am sure, because I know that Bill took her box; but whether it is 8 or 9 I can't say."

"And the street?"

"Deal Street; it is a poor neighborhood, but respectable."

"Had she any means of making her own livelihood?" asked the Minister, anxiously.

"She taught Miss Smith, leastways she was to have taught her, French and Italian, for five shillings a-week; but what with her going away, and what with her illness, that beginning were not gone on with, that I know of."

Master Malcolm thanked the woman for her kindness, and went out again into the wet street, for the fog had now changed into a thick, drizzling rain.

"To Deal Street," he said; and the cabman mounted, with much grumbling, into his seat, and tucked his horse-cloth tighter round his knees.

They tried No. 8 first, then No. 9; Mrs. Carrol was not known at either house.

The cabman advised trying 18 or 19, both

fruitlessly; at last, in despair, they tried 28, and this time were so far successful that they found that Mrs. Carrol had been there.

The Minister shivered as he saw the dirty, poverty-stricken look of the place. The landlady, an aggressive-looking woman, with her black hair twisted into curl-papers, led the way sharply into her private parlor, a small room, with a huge-patterned drab paper, and two vases of wax-flowers, veiled in coarse yellow muslin.

She began talking at once.

"If you're the friends, sir, you ought to look after her better—that's all I can say. Here she comes, that weak and ill, as I thought she would have died on my hands; but when I asked my rent, she up and paid me a week in advance, which, as she had no reference, is customary, and——"

But the Minister cut short her endless flow of talk, asking—

"Can you tell me her present address?"

"Indeed and I cannot; which it's doubtful whether any one hereabouts can, for no one notices where them goes as have paid up every penny they owes, for a real lady she was."

"Why did she leave you?" asked the Minister, his heart sinking very low.

"Well," began the woman, twisting up her apron, "she was a deal of trouble, and the baby was a handful, just begun with its teething."

"You sent her away?"

"No—not that exactly; but I put on six-

pence for the child, and its fresh milk came to tenpence."

"So it was want of money drove her away," said the Minister; "had she no means of support?"

"She went out, day after day, after them advertisements, but nothing ever came of it, and that is how we come to have such a deal of trouble with the child. One day when she came in she found it alone, and crying, the perverse little viper, which it hadn't been alone ten minutes; such language as she used,—my word, we ain't accustomed to that style of thing, not Mary Ann and me. But as she had paid her week, we could do nothing till the time was up. After that she always dragged that heavy child wherever she went, and at last was brought home by a policeman in a cab, which she had fainted in the street. I don't call that respectable myself."

The Minister could hardly speak for sorrow and indignation—he shook the dust off his feet as he crossed the threshold of the woman's house.

Where should he go next? how should he pursue his inquiries? He had no resource but to confide to the cabman that he was in search of a lady who could not be found; and he was much astonished by the man putting his finger on the side of his nose, and saying, with a wink—

"Now it's all square; ain't it? you ain't a peeler in disguise?"

"A what?" said the bewildered man.



"You ain't a detective? for, if you are, darn'd if I'll help you."

"Oh no, no! I am a minister of the Church of Scotland, and in search of a stray lamb of my flock."

The cabman, smiling at the old-fashioned manners and dress of his employer, threw himself into the search. They went to all the petty tradesmen near, consulted cabmen who might have remembered carrying a lady, and her child and box, somewhere; but all in vain. Assunta was lost in this huge London wilderness.

At last, weary and disheartened, Master Malcolm returned to his hotel. The common room was now full of men, talking and smoking, and he made his way up to his own room.

He sat thinking gloomily, when an idea suddenly flashed across him. Assunta had promised always to send him her address; that she had delayed writing from Deal Street might be accounted for by the fact that she had remained there so short a time; but in all probability a letter was waiting for him now at his own manse, in the very north of Scotland, telling him where she was, perhaps that she had already arrived at utmost need. Master Malcolm sat down and wrote at once to Kerenhapuch desiring her to forward his letters should there be any; and bitter were his regrets when he considered that at least six days must elapse before he could hope for an answer.

He thought that no time during the whole course of his life had seemed so long as the

next week, for it was seven days before the answer came ; he had no occupation but wandering about the streets, or reading the papers.

He strove hard not to lose time, and whenever he saw "To Let" printed on the windows, would go in and ask hopelessly for Assunta ; and he would wander in the parks, hoping that her good angel would cause her to bring her child out for change of air ; but he always came home disappointed.

The letter arrived at last. Master Malcolm was right in his conjecture. She had written to him, and as he read her letter, his heart died within him.

"My only friend," she wrote, "sorrow has broken down my pride ; I am changed now. Oh send me money, for I know not where to turn ! Tell Lady Grisel that I accept her offer—it is for Ewan's child. I am very ill, so ill that I can scarcely see to write, but they are very kind to me and to baby. Send me——" the letter broke off abruptly, and the direction was written in a strange hand.

And this was a week ago—nay, more—ten or eleven days ago. Master Malcolm seized on his hat and rushed down stairs, calling loudly for a cab.

He drove off to Whittle Court, bribing the cabman to drive with speed.

It was a long ride, and the street that they drove down at last was narrow and dirty. Damp clothes hung out of the windows to dry, and dirty children were making mud-pies in the road.

No. 60 turned out to be a sort of carpet-shop, where rugs and brushes were hung all over the outside ; and the Minister had to pick his way through piles of chairs and iron bedsteads. The atmosphere was choked with dust.

The shop-owner, a fussy little man in a black apron, directed him up stairs—and to the top-most story he went, where he was received by a clean-looking woman, who at his first inquiry burst into tears.

"So you have come after her, poor lady, and might have helped her," she sobbed ; "and she so ill."

"Can I see her at once?"

"Law bless you, sir! see her? She has been gone this week."

"Gone! where?"

"Where them must go who has none to help them," said the woman—"why, she has gone to the workhouse."

Assunta, the proud Assunta, come to this. Master Malcolm felt stunned as he heard the news ; he hurried down stairs, the woman gave him the direction, and he was once more on the road.

"Poor Assunta! poor child!" he murmured to himself; "what a piteous fate!"

Now the cab rattled up to the door, and stopped, and Master Malcolm got out. He asked for the matron, and was received by her in her business room.

She was a kind-hearted woman, and most anxious to do all in her power to help those under her charge.

"Let me see," said she, rapidly wetting her thumb, and turning over the pages of her thick book of cases. "A young woman taken in on Thursday the eleventh. Ah! here it is. Mrs. Carrol and child, brought in by Dr. Monk—he is our doctor, sir; put in Infirmary No. 14. Ah, sir!" the kind woman stopped and looked at him.

"Can I see her?" he said, eagerly; "she has friends who have only just heard of her distress."

"I am afraid, sir, her friends are too late."

"Too late?"

"No. 14 died at twelve o'clock last night."

The Minister covered his face with his hands. "Can I see her!" he said, after a moment's pause.

The matron nodded, and led the way. Able-bodied inmates were sweeping the stairs, and she spoke sharply to one or two as she passed. A strong smell of ironing from the laundry below, filled the air. She opened the door of a little room apart and ushered him in.

Under a coarse white sheet lay a rigid, still form. The matron raised its folds, and he looked for the last time on the calm, dead face of Assunta.

He could not weep over the storm-tossed life, now entered into rest; but he asked leave to stay and pray, and the matron left him alone.

## CHAPTER VIII.

IN Edgar Street, Soho, was a well-known bookshop kept by Fairdon Brothers. One of the two brothers, Andrew Fairdon, attended to the business; the other had gone out to Australia many years ago, and having sent home money to put into the business, honest Andrew had added "Brothers" in large gold letters to the inscription over the door. Lovel Fairdon had almost faded from the remembrance of his English relatives. The two brothers in former days had been close companions and friends, both intelligent, both ambitious. Lovel's ambition took a practical, money-making turn; Andrew's was quenched by his falling in love, which caused him contentedly to take up his father's trade, and sell books in Edgar Street, Soho.

The girl whom he married had a little dower of two hundred pounds, very profitable to the business. She was somewhat beneath him in position, far below him in education, the only child of a small tenant-farmer. She had lived all her life among poultry and cows, and was easily attracted by the clever young Londoner, who came down frequently for a country Sunday; and her shy, gentle manner, and the fresh sweetness of her beauty, proved to him an irresistible attraction.

The shrewder Lovel tried to talk away his brother's fancy, but Andrew's heart had always been better than his head, and he triumphantly brought home his young wife from the green open country to gloomy Soho.

Nannie pined at first, as was but natural. Andrew was too clever for her; he was always talking of things of which she knew nothing—always writing scraps of poetry that she could admire, though she could not understand. Sometimes he would be angry with her for her want of power of criticism; discriminating admiration he called it—not blind incense. What he longed for was, that she should praise it line by line, not all in a lump. But as they grew older together, he became satisfied to talk to her, feeling her purring acceptance of his marvelous cleverness and apt quotations just the soothing balm needful for the irritable poetical temperament. Andrew was great at seeing himself in all imaginable attitudes—now as a deep and unfathomable man of letters, but oftener as a misunderstood genius. He mistook his difficulty in finding rhymes for the workings of genius, striving in agony to embody its deep thoughts in language. “The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,” was often in his mind, and at such moments he would unbutton his waistcoat, which the expansion of his soul made too tight.

But with all his absurdities he was a good and amiable man, and few couples loved each other with a more harmonious love than Andrew Fairdon and Nannie his wife.

Nannie had but one real trouble in the wide

world now that she had outlived her transplantation into the busy hum of the London streets, and that trouble was, that the one only little child God had sent her, had remained but one short week in the world, and had been laid to rest in the green church-yard of her own home. Some portion of her heart had been buried with it she was wont to say, and it was years before the pain softened ; not that she rebelled in spirit, but that there was something uncongenial in her life, something undefined even to herself—a want of fields, and flowers, and the music of birds, and the healthful hard work of her youth ; and this want for one short week was filled up by the sweetness of motherhood, only to leave a darker void behind. So Nannie's pretty face had a sad look, and very early there were threads of silver in her fair hair. Mrs. Fairdon's great delight was to do what good she could. The parish workhouse was not far from the shop, and she had made acquaintance with the busy matron, Mrs. Brown ; the consequence was that she was often allowed to visit the old people and the infirmary, and her visits were hailed with delight—meaning, as they often did, packets of tea, good home-made cake, and sometimes baskets of flowers. More than one poor friendless waif of society owed to her that most precious of all gifts, a fresh start on coming out of the house. In any out-of-the-way case Mrs. Brown was wont to seek sympathy and even advice from Mrs. Fairdon.

It had been so when poor Assunta had been brought in almost dying, and reduced to such

poverty that she had sold all the warm clothing she had possessed.

Assunta never again raised her head from the pillow. The baby was a strong, healthy child, and throve well even on workhouse nursing and food. It used to lie contentedly cooing for hours by its dying mother, at once the comfort and agony of her heart. That no answer came to her letter seemed to Assunta to mean that Lady Grisel had withdrawn her offer of help, that the Minister shrank from telling her such grievous news, that she was deserted by all.

One day Mrs. Fairdon (who visited her every day) found her in such grief that, melting into tears herself, she implored her to make her indeed her friend and confidant; and Assunta told her all her miserable story, only omitting the names. As she dwelt on Ewan's goodness, his beauty and his love for her, Mrs. Fairdon saw well the blow that the suspicion of his treachery must have been; but she stifled the exclamation of indignation that rose to her lips, fearing to add to Assunta's anguish by confirming the dread, only half admitted by the unhappy girl, that Ewan had indeed been false. She soothed and petted her; then burst forth the poor mother's terror for her child—what would become of her? she was so utterly friendless.

When Mrs. Fairdon left her bedside and went home, a dazzling vision was playing before her eyes. Would Andrew allow her to adopt this child as her own? Once, half in joke, he had told her that if she could find a baby without



one single tie in the world, she might have it, and the thought had been with her ever since.

The bookseller had not finished his work, but he was standing in the tiny back-yard of his house washing his hands at the pump, and singing merrily to himself Autolycus's song—

“Jog on, jog on, the footpath way,  
And merrily hent the stile-a ;  
A merry heart goes all the day,  
Your sad tires in a mile-a.”

When he saw Mrs. Fairdon's comely face now full of the keenest anxiety, he went up to her and kissed her, saying, “How now, sweet wife?”

Shakespeare was his mood just now, and he could scarcely speak plain English.

With eager haste she told him her story, holding him tight by one of the buttons of his coat. She had found the baby at last! Might she have it? As she turned her tender blue eyes up to his, Andrew read in them that indescribable longing of the childless mother, that unsatisfied emptiness of heart and arms that till this moment he had scarcely realized, and had not noticed for years.

“It is such a dear little thing!” she said; “a sweet little winsome thing with golden hair. It would be a joy and comfort to you, Andy, and you could teach it your fine poetry, and educate it to understand as I never could—no, not if I live to a hundred, my dear.”

The man's eyes sparkled—there was something very inviting about the idea of this child to bring up.

"You are sure that nobody will be wanting to claim it?" he said, jealously, as though it were already his own. "If anybody else wants it, I'll not lift a finger to take it; my right must be undisputed."

"It has neither father nor kinsfolk to own it, and the poor young mother is dying; she is an Italian."

"An Italian! hum!"

"But she has lived all her life in Scotland," cried Mrs. Fairdon, "and speaks English as well as yourself."

"It might be called Juliet," muttered Andrew, and his wife caught at the words.

"Then I may? I can tell her that the child shall be ours?"

"Yes; but, my dear"—he was surprised to find his soft-hearted wife sobbing aloud on his breast; he went on kindly—"my dear, I will leave all to you: we must not have it if it is claimed by others; make sure of this first."

"I will—I will, thank you, Andy—how can I thank you?"

Before half her thanks were over, she had gone back to tell the news to poor Assunta.

Andrew, meanwhile, unmindful of the cold, drew a rush-bottomed chair from the kitchen into the yard, and sitting down, smiled as he lit his pipe and thought of the golden-haired child playing about round his knee—its dear little voice making the old shop resound with the noise; and he planned a swing between two linen-posts, and wondered whether in the midst

of his piles of books were any fitted for very little children.

When Mrs. Fairdon reached the workhouse, Assunta was almost past speaking. The people lying in their rows of beds ranged against the buff-plastered walls were all silent, for they knew that one soul from among them was passing away.

When Mrs. Fairdon knelt down and took the dying girl's hand in hers, and swore to be a mother to her child, the look that came over her face was of indescribable joy and thankfulness; she held her hand tightly in hers, and never took her eyes from Nannie's face, till the end came about twelve o'clock.

When Nannie came home, Andrew was quite grieved that she had not been able to bring the baby back with her; he longed to see it now that it was to be his, and was almost cross to his gentle wife.

## CHAPTER IX.

**V**ERY early on the following morning, Mrs. Fairdon was at the workhouse—as early as she could get away from her household cares at home.

It was visiting day, and the friends of the patients were in the infirmary. The nurse, who was very busy, just told her that No. 14's baby had been taken to the old people's ward to be out of the way, and that one old woman had been told off to take care of it. She hurried away to the large ward, and found that also to be full of visitors. Eager as she was, she found time to stop at one bed with a cheerful "Good-morning, Mrs. Frank," knowing that that poor old woman had lost every friend she possessed in the world, and always spent visiting days in softly crying to herself.

The "good-morning" in that kind voice seemed especially welcome to-day; and though Mrs. Frank only nodded awkwardly, she muttered, "God bless you, ma'am!"

As Mrs. Fairdon hurried through the rooms, she suddenly started and shivered—she saw the baby, her own precious baby, in the arms of a stranger.

The sky through the windows above the beds

was gray and dim, for the day was cloudy, but one ray of brilliant white light shone round the rugged face of Master Malcolm, as he sat on a chair between two white beds, with Assunta's golden-haired child in his arms. He was looking down on it tenderly, with deep compassion, and the baby was gazing up into his face with the solemn dignity of infancy.

Mrs. Fairdon's heart died within her. Had he come to claim it? perhaps to take it away! What should she do? She went swiftly up to the Minister and held out her arms for the child. He rose to his feet, but showed a moment's reluctance to part with it.

"Will you not give it me, sir?" she said, piteously. "It is mine."

"Yours! I was told that it was the child of a friend of mine who has been called away from this world," he said, with a sigh.

"Oh, may I not have it?" entreated poor Nannie, with tears in her eyes. "The poor mother gave it to me—it is mine. I was with her at the last, and I swore to bring up the little one as my own.

The Minister looked at her earnestly; the stamp of goodness was on her face unmistakably, but still he hesitated. "You take upon yourself a great responsibility," he said, "to bring this little lamb to her Heavenly Father's fold."

"With His help I am not afraid," said Mrs. Fairdon, reverently. Then the Minister laid the child in her arms, saying, "Take her, then, in God's name."

Many important matters had to be settled, and several times Master Malcolm found himself in the back sitting-room of Fairdon's shop, arranging things with him. He could not feel justified in delivering the child wholly into these good people's care until he should have had time to communicate with Lady Grisel, whose name he forbore to mention; neither did the Fairdons seek to know it. The Minister thought that some payment ought to be made to help to meet the expenses of its support; but this Andrew absolutely declined. He was immovable; either the child must remain entirely in the hands of its unwilling relatives, or must be delivered over body and soul to him, to bear his name, and to be to him as a real daughter, her kindred resigning every claim.

Master Malcolm learned from the matron and others how completely he might rely on the excellence and goodness of the worthy couple; and it was with a lighter heart than he could have believed possible, that he wrote to tell Lady Grisel that a home, in every way so desirable, had offered itself for the little orphan.

The answer came at length; the waiting had seemed very long to the anxious Mrs. Fairdon. Lady Grisel was willing to renounce all claim, once and for ever, to the guardianship of the child. She thanked God that so good a home was found, and that now the piteous story of poor Assunta need never be further known; and she said that she never could express in words her gratitude for all that the Minister had done.

So Master Malcolm solemnly blessed the

child, and went home again to the north, and Mrs. Fairdon took possession of her as her own and brought her home.

There was quite a little *fête* made when the baby arrived. The bookseller and his assistant, a lad of nineteen most faithfully attached to his master, decorated the house with holly and ivy, and composed a large "Welcome" in holly-berries to nail over its new bed. Andrew was most happy and fussy over the ordering of the daily cans of new milk and cream, very full of its new clothes and his plans of education. He insisted on going with his wife to one baby-shop after another, choosing hoods and pelisses, and when Mrs. Fairdon would fain have chosen sober gray, insisted on pale blue and satin quiltings—nothing was too good for the adopted child.

The evening after its arrival, Andrew came out of the shop armed with an immense Shakespeare. He began at once turning over the leaves. "Shakespeare has said, 'What's in a name?' my dear—wherein he made, to my humble thinking, a grave mistake. A name! why, what were Portia if her name were Jane, or an Ophelia named Martha? where were the sorrows of a Danish Prince Thomas, or the despairs of a Moorish William? No, no; such a Portia would only have been a sentimental middle-class female—such an Ophelia a whining milkmaid. Do you not see the difference, wife?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Nannie, composedly.

"A name," he went on, "adds to individuality as much as, or more than, the expression of

the face or the cut of the clothes. Why, nature is so strong, that a woman who has been named unsuitably, in nine cases out of ten has her name changed. A gentle Margaret will perforce be Meg, Peggie, Minnie, or other such ; while a fierce nature will bear the name of Phoebe or Celia as ill as a charger the plowshare."

"Quite true," said the admiring Nannie.

"So, wife, it is a most important thing, the name we give our child ; remember, it stamps her with a certain character for life. We will have none of your foolish names ; there are enough of black-haired Blanches and flaxen Roses already in the world : her name must be significant."

"Susan was my mother's name," said Mrs. Fairdon, timidly.

"Susan, yes—pretty, rural, and simple—an affectionate name. No, my dear, it is a good name, but it does not reach my idea of what is suitable."

"She has been baptized Margaret Griselda."

"The very thing," cried Andrew, fretfully.

"We could not have thought of finer, nobler names ; but for the very reason that they are her names, they must not be her names. Griselda!—beautiful ! I should have thought of that at once."

"It seems a pity," said Mrs. Fairdon, going on with her work : in truth she little cared what name it would please her husband to give the child ; to her the rose by any name would smell as sweet.

"Shakespeare," went on Andrew, "had a marvelous gift in naming. Does not Juliet



bring before your mind the gorgeous southern beauty of the child of Capulet, and Beatrice all wit and brilliance? I had thought of Juliet, but her head is all covered with rings of golden hair. She is very pretty, Nannie. I shall not be away long; I am going to look at her little face."

Mrs. Fairdon quietly went on sewing: it was pretty to see the entire look of content and happiness on her sweet face.

Presently Andrew stole back on tiptoe and said, "She moved in her sleep, Nannie, and when I put my finger in her little palm, her hand closed on it tightly. She kept me at least five minutes, for I was afraid of wakening her by taking it away. God bless her!—now do not speak, but let me think."

And leaning his head on his hand, Andrew Fairdon remained silent for perhaps a quarter of an hour, turning over the leaves of Shakespeare very slowly.

Then he rose and said gently, "Perhaps if we have prayers first, I may think afterward of a name, Nannie."

Mrs. Fairdon rose and folded up her work, and summoned the servant-girl. Andrew read a chapter from the Bible, then a few short collects. When the girl was gone he turned to his wife smiling.

"I have it, Nannie," he said. "A beautiful name, a rare name, and one, alas! too well suited to the little one."

"What is it?" she said, eagerly.

"Perdita."

"Is it not heathenish?" she asked. But Andrew gave no heed: he went on, "No name of all Shakespeare's creations brings sweeter thoughts to the mind; there is not one so full of grace and poetry as *Perdita*," and he went on murmuring to himself—

"When you speak, sweet,  
I'd have you do it ever: when you sing,  
I'd have you buy and sell so; so give alms;  
Pray so: and, for the ordering your affairs,  
To sing them too. When you do dance, I wish you  
A wave o' the sea, that you might ever do  
Nothing but that; move still, still so, and own  
No other function. Each your doing,  
So singular in each particular,  
Crowns what you are doing in the present deeds,  
That all your acts are queens."

So it was decided that the little orphan, poor Assunta's golden-haired child, should be called *Perdita*.

## CHAPTER X.

**R**IGHT happy are those who in after-life can look back upon a childhood unclouded in its calm and peace. Little Perdita's life was as sweet and happy as are the lives of little lambs and little birds—nay, sweeter, for storms, and birds of prey, and many terrors, burden the lives of even the youngest animals; but from all little Perdita was sheltered, perhaps fenced round by the wings of an angel, whose especial task might be to guard the orphan baby.

It might seem as if a crowded street in London, a little paved court-yard, into which the kitchen door opened, were little like a Paradise; but a child requires so little, it has such a wondrous gift of imagination: a little pillow, stuffed with an extemporized face, will be as precious to it as the finest wax doll; a broken hobby-horse will carry as doughty a knight as the noblest rocking-horse; and chairs will make capital railway-trains, and broom-sticks save drowning sailors, with a stool for a rock.

Perdita had one possession that was actual, not an idealized treasure—one for which many a rich little child, with beautiful toys, would have longed,—this was a little Maltese dog, excessively small, and covered with white, woolly

curls. The dog lived with her, ate the portion she gave it of her own bread and milk, and never left her. She washed it, and dressed it in pink and blue bows, and talked to it about everything she had to talk about; and whenever she went out with her adopted father, Fluff accompanied them. The little one grew and thrived wonderfully. She was very fair, and her hair kept its beautiful golden hue; but her eyes grew darker and darker, and of a deep soft brown, the only features she inherited from her Italian mother.

Andrew and Nannie loved the very ground she trod on—she became the center of their thoughts and plans. He would have spoilt her, without doubt; but Nannie was wise and firm, and always did her best to counteract the spoiling with necessary reproof, which, however, was such a pain to Andrew, that Nannie would feel ruefully that she was punishing her husband far more than the child. Fluff was a great trouble when they walked in the Park. He would wind his long pink ribbon round the legs of the passers-by; he would bark fiercely at dogs that could easily have crunched him, bones and all, into a handful of dust; but Andrew minded nothing for Dita's sake. Dita was the name little Perdita had given herself when she first began to speak. That first sentence was an era in her history. They were sitting in the Park on a bench, Mr. and Mrs. Fairdon, with Perdita between them, when a man came by with three puppies in his arms. The child flew after him, and caught one in her little

hands, holding it strained tightly to her flushed cheeks, and looking imploringly at the owner.

“Dita have it, dada!”

Of course it was bought, and called Fluff, and Dita never lost her intense attachment to the little animal. Perdita's only playfellow was the young shopman, who devoted every spare moment to her service. He was a strange lad, awkward and ungainly in appearance, with large hands and feet, slouching gait, and wistful eyes. Long ago his master had called him the melancholy Jaques, and the name had stuck to him ever since. He had been left fatherless some years before, and his mother, reduced to extreme poverty, had found it hard to give the boy even the commonest education; but even at ten years old his taste for reading amounted to a passion. His father had been a village schoolmaster—a feckless being, tormented by the boys, ridiculed and teased. He loved learning for learning's sake, and would speak with some pride of the scholastic tastes of his few relations: it ran in the blood, he would say; but, alas! so also did the tendency to go down in the world, to get poorer, and to die young—and the widow was left in great difficulties. The boy struggled against every difficulty, devoured every book in the village library, and hungered for more; his mother managed to make her living by washing, and, wisely seeing that it was impossible to content Jaques by a country trade, sanctioned his going up to London, with a recommendation from the village schoolmaster. Jaques was fortunate enough to please

Andrew Fairdon, and he entered upon his duties with an enthusiasm that won his master's heart. He was among books—precious books; he never ceased working till he made himself acquainted with every shelf, and the books added to the stock were generally bought by him, for Andrew was clever enough to see that Jaques soon knew more of his trade than he did himself.

Before she could walk alone, Perdita treated him as her slave. His holidays were spent in being her cat, her elephant, or her horse; and one day Mrs. Fairdon had to run out and stop the game Dita had invented, which was filling a doll's can at the pump and pouring it over his face.

At one time it became impressed on Andrew's mind that he was made for great things, that it was his destination to achieve a great literary success. He had now lived for years in a Shakespearian atmosphere, and that made him determine that the first attempt should be a play, after the manner of Shakespeare.

Perdita was five years old, and very pretty. She was Andrew's constant companion, sitting all the morning curled up in a corner of the shop, with Fluff or her doll, or trotting by his side out of doors when he was free.

It was a time of discomfort to Nannie when her husband began his literary labors; he almost deserted the shop, leaving the care of it to Jaques during the greater part of the day, and sat in the parlor passing from one tremendous mood to another during the composition

of the plot. Perdita was not alarmed—she was too much accustomed to his ways; but now and then, if without any reason but the joy of some inspiration within him, Andrew would leap up, strike the table, and utter a laugh of triumph, Fluff would rush forward in a paroxysm of shrill, excited barking, and then Dita laughed also, and they would all kiss and go back to their corners.

Comedy and Tragedy held the author between them as they held the great Garrick of old. Tragedy, perhaps, was the more attractive of the two—more sublime; but there was more play of fancy in Comedy—more scope for graceful imagery, in which Andrew considered himself to excel.

The plot was a considerable difficulty; it seemed to him that if he had but a plot, his pen would flow readily. His genius scorned advice, but was open to insinuated suggestions, and one morning he said—

“Nannie, were you to set yourself to invent a story, what would you say?”

She knew what he wanted.

“A story of a foundling child would be touching and sweet—would it not, dear?”

“Ha! alone in the world—sans father, sans mother, sans sister, sans brother. A soliloquy! There must be a fool, and a king or a duke, and some female *confidante*—two ladies, one rich—the duke’s daughter.”

“Jaquy,” said Dita, sitting on the little three-legged stool in the yard—“Jaquy, be a horse!” He went down on his knees.

"This child's talk may be the making of my play," murmured Andrew, sitting at the open window biting his pen.

Dita had climbed on to her patient horse's back and was thumping him hard.

"My heroine goes out a-hunting," he noted down; "is bold and somewhat merciless—she will need a Petruchio, haply——"

"Now jump! jump! jump!" shouted Dita. "Jump high, and me tumble off!"

And she rolled off round his neck on to the ground, and pushing her curls off her little rosy face, she cried—

"Now me dead!"

Andrew wrote down *might and main*: the very way to get the fair lady under the roof of the duke, was to have her thrown from her horse while hunting in the forest, taken up for dead, and carried into the midst of the court. He looked up for more inspiration, but Dita was tired of being dead, and was running about on all-fours with Jaques after her, shouting—

"I a bunny, and you be a dog and bite me!" and Fluff was half mad with excitement.

Mrs. Fairdon stood watching at the door, and she did not stop the game to-day, because it was Saturday, and Dita had on a dirty frock on purpose.

When she went in, Andrew had laid down the paper with a sigh of relief—

"I have got my first act, Nan," he said. "That child is a genius, and has brought me inspiration. I feel now that my poor brain



wants rest ; let us take a walk and make Jaques go with us."

"I knew she would be a help to you," said Nannie, kissing Dita as she captured her. "Bless the child, I must change everything she has on ; and for you, Jaques, brush yourself, and put on a clean tie, and then we'll go out ;" and she carried off the laughing and kicking child.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE next day Andrew tried in vain to make Dita play in a suggestive manner; she would insist that her doll was ill, and watched it with her finger on her lips. So far this was good, for it suggested to Andrew a long illness to his heroine in the ducal palace; and he determined to write his first act, and trust to the future for the rest of the story.

He began his soliloquy, and to his delight found it to flow smoothly and easily: a sort of refrain—"Alone, alone; all, all alone"—gave a poetic melancholy which charmed him. He wrote for some pages and then began uneasily to fear that soliloquies in 'Shakespeare' did not generally last so long. He took down his favorite, and patiently counted every word in one of Hamlet's longest speeches, and on comparing it with the manuscript, found it so much longer than he expected, that he ventured to add yet another page to the expression of his heroine's thoughts. The *confidante* had just broken in on her meditations with "How now, fair mistress?" or "Prithee, lady" (he had not quite decided which), when Nannie came running with a letter in her hand.

"A letter for you, Andy," she said, "and there is a shilling to pay. It is an Australian letter, and, I fear, contains no good news, for it is not in your brother's writing, and it is sealed with black."

Andrew's face grew pale as he hurriedly took the letter.

"Pay the man," he said, giving her the money, and she went.

Presently little Dita came in from the yard, very demurely carrying her sick doll; but when she saw Andrew's face she threw it aside, and running up to him put her arms round his neck, and clambered up into his lap.

"What is it?—what is it, daddy?" she cried; but to her surprise he put her gently down, and went up to his room. Dita began to cry, she knew not why, and Nannie came in to comfort her, but she would not let her go up to disturb Andrew; she feared that some very bad news had come, and her heart ached for her husband, for she knew how dearly he had loved his brother. She took Dita on her lap and dried her eyes, and told her stories to allay her own anxiety.

At last Andrew came down, and his eyes were red as though he had been weeping; he came up to her and put his hands on her shoulders and said—

"I have had some wonderful news, Nannie; this letter is from Lovel's lawyer."

"From his lawyer?" she said, wonderingly.

"Yes: he tells me that my poor brother is dead." His voice choked, and for a moment he

could not go on ; then said, " Oh, Nannie, I am so grieved ! "

Nannie, with tender sympathy, stroked his hand, while little Dita kissed and coaxed his leg, round which she had wound her arms. Then, to Nannie's surprise, he suddenly threw himself into a chair, and gave an odd little laugh.

" Something very wonderful has happened, wife. Lovel has left me everything he possessed. He made his will before he was taken ill with fever, and I am his heir. "

" Poor Lovel !—he always loved you beyond any one else. So he leaves no widow, which is happy for her, poor thing. "

" He never was married, " said Andrew sharply.

" No, love. I was only thinking a widow might have been left. "

" No ; I am his sole heir—his residuary legatee. "

" You will be able to increase the business, Andy, and have more help in the shop. "

" Help in the shop !—increase the business ! No more business for me ; we shall be rich, and live in the country. "

Nannie clasped her hands in delight.

" In the country ! Dita to be brought up in the sweet country air, among daisies and roses and flowers ; is it true, Andy ? "

" And cows and chickens and ducks, " he added, half laughing, and yet with a gasp.

" We shall live in some sweet little house with a garden, Andy—shall it not have a garden ? "

But Andrew straightened himself in his chair, and pulled up his stock, and said rather pompously—

"No, my dear; in a great house with a park round it. We shall be very rich; we shall have a great many servants, and you will drive out in a carriage of your own, and Dita shall learn to sing, and dance, and play on the piano."

"And Fluff, daddy?"

"Fluff shall have a new collar, with silver bells."

"And Jaques a new violin?"

"The best that can be found."

"And dolly?"

"Hush, Dita," said Nannie, rather solemnly, and she put her hand into her husband's; he felt that she was trembling.

"It frightens me," she said; "we are not born to these things."

"I will teach you, Nannie," said Andrew, majestically; "I feel already as if my career were about to commence."

"But you are so clever and I am so foolish," cried Nannie, sobbing.

Andrew, kindly patting her shoulder, went on: "We shall have between ten and twelve thousand a-year, and there is a very large sum of ready money, with which my poor brother had intended to buy an estate in the country, and settle down as an English squire."

Nannie raised her head, and dried her eyes.

"It will be a great change," she said; "but how did poor Lovel ever make such a fortune?"

"He has had such good fortune as few have

had," he answered; "and he was very clever; he knew when to buy, and when to sell. The income we shall enjoy comes from the large estates he has bought—great sheep-farms; and these are in very trustworthy hands, in which he always meant to leave them when he came home."

"God help us to manage well!" said Nannie, reverently. Andrew said "Amen;" but his thoughts were in such a whirl, and he was already building such castles in the air, that he scarcely took in the fervor of her words.

Dita, longing to tell the news first to some one, had slipped off Nannie's knee, and flown into the shop to Jaques.

Some one was buying a book, and she had to stand impatiently waiting till the customer was gone; then she climbed on to the counter, and began her story.

"Father no more shop—we all going away to live with the ducks and the daisies."

Jaques looked bewildered, as well he might.

"Going away, miss," he repeated. "What do you mean?"

"We rich—quite rich, and live with the ducks and daisies; and Fluff have a silver bell, and you have a new fiddle with paint all over it."

Jaques shook his head, and went on folding up the books that he had sold in neat parcels, and directing them with a pen which he took from behind his ear. She was accustomed to his going on with his business while she talked, and had just begun: "You must come, too, Jaquy," when Andrew came into the shop, and

briefly told Jaques what had happened : he was touched by the lad's manner ; Jaques's eyes filled with tears, and he seized his master's hand, saying earnestly—

“God bless you, sir, wherever you go! you have been a good master to me.”

A gentleman came into the shop and asked for a rare edition of “Dante.” Andrew did not quite know where it was, but Jaques knew every book on the shelves, and produced the copy required. This was no time for sentiment—this busy time of year—the middle of the London season.

Nannie went about her work with her heart so full that now and then the large tears rolled down her cheeks : she kept telling herself how glad and thankful she ought to feel, and what a joy this new wealth would be ; but the responsibility seemed to outweigh the joy, and her unfitness for such responsibility made her dread it beyond measure.

When Andrew's last customers were gone, he leant wearily against the counter, while the ever-active Jaques was putting up the shutters.

“I shall not sell another book, Jaques,” he said.

Jaques's eyes opened wide.

“Not one ; those that remain will form the commencement of a library for me.”

“Oh, master, master!” cried Jaques, in an agony ; “why did you let that ‘Dante’ go?”

“I was a fool!” cried Andrew, striking his hand on the table ; “but I am bewildered and tired, Jaques, and it is always in my head—

' I never heard a passion so confused,  
So strange, outrageous, and so variable,  
As the dog Jew did utter in the streets :  
My ducats—O my brother—O my ducats !'

First one, then t'other, I am up and down with joy and grief like buckets in a well. To-morrow, Jaques, we will write up that the shop is closed."

On the next day a notice to that effect was pasted all over the closed shutters of the shop.

An old gentleman, or rather a man whom too much study had prematurely aged, was passing by the door and saw the notice. He knew of a treasure within that shop, and trusted that no one from without knew of it but himself. He had his suspicions of Jaques, who knew the value of a book, Andrew was wont to say, by its very smell. But Jaques had asked as high a price for this treasure (no less than De Bry's *Virginia in English*) as he dared, trusting with a trembling heart that his customer would find it beyond his means, and that he might preserve it in the shop.

The scholar had entered into a daily correspondence on the subject, always coming in about five o'clock, looking lovingly at the precious volume, offering a little more or a little less, while Jaques stood respectfully by, with a beating heart, dreading every moment he might offer the sum he himself had named.

Now on this bright June morning the scholar was passing by, and he saw the shop shut up. The perspiration started out upon his brow—an indescribable shiver passed down his back and he precipitately rushed to the door.



A smile was on Jaques's face—a fiendish grin the scholar termed it afterward—as he told him with all courtesy that the coveted treasure was no longer to be sold.

He gnashed his teeth; he offered sums of money that made Jaques softly go and shut the back door.

He heard the story with a bitter spirit—that Fairdon had succeeded to a fortune, and was determined to keep his books to commence his own library.

“I will give any one anything they ask in future,” he said bitterly to himself, as he thrust his hat upon his head, unwitting that he had brushed it all the wrong way, “and never attempt to bargain again—fool, fool that I was!”

A friend met him and took his quivering arm, and heard with composure the terrible story of his wrongs.

“Never mind, old boy!” he said, soothingly, “keep your eye on him; these sort of *nouveaux riches* constantly come to grief, and you will get it for half the price.”

It was sorry comfort, for Andrew Fairdon never came to grief, and the scholar had a thorn rankling in his flesh as long as he should live on earth.

## CHAPTER XII.

"I HAVE never told you one condition of our wealth, Nannie," said Mr. Fairdon, a few days after the arrival of the wonderful news—"we shall have to change our name."

"Indeed, Andy, it seems that our very skins will be changed!" said his wife. "What new-fangled name shall we have to adopt?"

"Lovel; it is in my poor brother's will. You have heard me speak of Mr. Lovel who lived in Henrietta Street; he was of very high family, though he was in trade. He was my brother's godfather: my father had done him a service once, and he was very kind to him afterward. Somewhere about there is a mug which he gave Lovel at his christening—Dita might have it to use. How shall you like to be Mrs. Lovel, wife?"

"I do not know. It does not come natural to a woman of my age to be changing my name, like a new-married girl."

"There is a great deal to think of, Nannie," said Andrew, striking his brow; "first, for your part, you must have some mourning."

"I have thought of that, and can manage very well. I have my black stuff as good as new, and Dita can have one like it, made of the

same ; then with a couple of black and white prints each (I saw some pretty ones in a window this morning) and a black ribbon to my bonnet, we shall do very well."

Andrew solemnly seated himself, and drew a long breath.

"My dear," he said, "you really must endeavor to attune your mind to our change of circumstances. I foresee difficulties, but if you try to please me, you will overcome them in time, and acquire that elegance which is indispensable in the wife of one who will henceforth figure among the landed gentry. To begin with, you may give your black gown—all your gowns—to Betty ; they are useless now."

"My dear——"

"Have the goodness to listen to me. I, being a man, do not of course know what your dress must be, but I do know that you should always wear silk and velvet or satin on Sundays ; and you must have low gowns for dinner."

"Never, never !" cried Nannie ; "me in a low gown ! Oh Andy, I would as soon come down without any gown at all !"

"But all ladies of fashion do," said Andrew, rather crossly.

"But I am not a lady ; do not make me ridiculous. I will wear silk as much as you like of an afternoon, and merino, or something fine and soft, to muddle about in of a morning ; but a low gown ! no."

"Well, you will displease me very much if you do not make every effort to be in your right place," said Andrew ; and Nannie's eyes filled

with tears. "And," he continued, "there are several more things of importance to tell you of: one is, that henceforth I shall cease to call you by the familiar Nannie, and you likewise must substitute Mr. Lovel or Andrew for Andy: I shall call you Anne, or Mrs. Lovel."

"I shall not know my own name," cried Nannie, piteously.

"You are quite unreasonable, and will really vex me, Mrs. Lovel," cried her husband.

Nannie, notwithstanding all her troubles, could not help smiling at the name. "What are you laughing at?" he said, sharply.

"Indeed, deary, I only smiled at my own name; but I will try to do all you wish," said she, humbly, coming up and putting her hands on his; "only you must be patient with me, honey, and not expect poor Nannie to become a grand lady all at once."

He was restored to good-humor, and said,—  
"Well, my dear, if you will do your best, I shall have no cause to be ashamed of you."

The words jarred on Nannie's ear—"Ashamed of her!" would it really come to that? If he could admit the possibility of such a feeling in his mind, some mischief was already done. Oh, how in her heart of hearts she hated the possession of Lovel's large fortune!

Nannie was wise, and saw that in the matter of dress she would please her husband by changing at once. So she dressed little Perdita in a fresh white frock, and went with her to a good dressmaker in Bond Street.

Mrs. Blunt was at home, and they were taken

up stairs into a show-room full of bonnets and caps and lace to Dita's delight.

Mrs. Blunt was attending to a very magnificently dressed lady with a pug in her arms; and nodding to Mrs. Fairdon, she said, "Sit down ma'am, and I'll come." As the great lady left the room, Nannie could not help hearing the dressmaker say in a loud whisper outside the door, "Mary Anne, why did you show the person in here?"

Then Mrs. Blunt came back, and sitting down, said—

"Well, and what can I do for you, ma'am?"

Poor Nannie's cheeks had become very red—no one could say what it was to her, this being out of her own sphere; her good taste led her to be simple, and she told her story.

"I have come to ask you to make me some gowns, ma'am," she said. "We have been simple folks, but my husband has inherited a large property, and wishes me to dress becomingly; and I should be very much obliged to you, ma'am, if you would advise me in what way to do so."

The dressmaker was touched by the total absence of affectation, and said, warmly, "Indeed, ma'am, I shall be most happy, and I will do my very best for you and little miss."

"Yes," said Nannie, brightening, "I should like her to be very well dressed—mostly in white, I think, as we are to live in the country."

The two women sat down together, and made out a list which rather startled Nannie by its length. To her great relief Mrs. Blunt told her

that at her age she need not wear a low gown, and promised her a couple of suitable ones for the evening, cut square and filled in with soft muslin; and she went away with cordial thanks.

For the next few weeks Andrew was always coming and going; he was anxious to find a place which would realize his idea of what a country gentleman's seat should be.

It was more difficult than he had imagined. Some were too small, others not grand enough; some were too modern. His great wish was to have something old, feeling as if the dignity of age would shed a borrowed luster over himself.

Meanwhile Nannie counted every day a respite, and one gained. She persuaded her husband not to bid her don her new clothes till they should leave Edgar Street, and he consented very reluctantly. She was singularly sensitive to ridicule, and would have feared to pass her own threshold into the familiar street.

This was a sad time for Jaques: he spent all his days among the books, poring over them, handling them lovingly, touching and retouching the catalogue he had made of them some time ago, and adding to it fresh comments—for he was aware that his master knew far less of their merits than he did, and had always to resort to Brunet or Lowndes for the information that he carried in his own brain. He must leave them now—must go out once more into the world; for nine years he had lived in that shop and he loved every dark corner in it.

It had been the custom for him always to join the little family at supper; but of late he had asked for his portion, and carried it away to eat by himself. There was a fine tact in Jaques, which only Nannie understood.

One morning Andrew was passing through the shop on his way out, when Jaques gently stopped him, saying—

“I have heard of a new place, sir, and if you could make it convenient I should be very glad if you would give me a character.”

Fairdon stopped—it was on his tongue to say, “What do you mean? I cannot part with you;” then his newly acquired grandness came uppermost; a recollection of obsequious upholsterers and bowing tailors, who waited on his pleasure in a very different manner from the straight-forward address of the lad. So he said, grandly—

“I shall be most happy, Danby: step into Mrs. Lovel’s sitting-room and bring me a pen and paper.” Jaques had not been called Danby for nine years, but he did as he was told, without a word.

Andrew drew off the gloves which he had taken to wearing, and laying his fine silk umbrella on the counter, he began to write. He could write but slowly, for he was practicing a large manly hand that should look thoroughly unbusiness-like, and becoming to a landed proprietor.

Having finished it, he gave it to Jaques with a smile that he considered bland, and left the shop. Jaques looked wistfully after him before

he took his hat down from its old familiar peg, and went off with his letter.

Andrew came home in great glee that evening. He had heard, from the land-agent whom he was employing, of a place which he thought would suit him to perfection—a beautiful old place in one of the loveliest counties of England. He could talk of nothing else—of its large deer-park and beautiful trees—of an old oak-paneled hall and library—and of the neighborhood, which was supposed to be exceptionally good.

They were sitting late over their supper, still talking over the glories of Salford Abbey, when there came a gentle knock at the door, and Jaques came in.

"You are busy," he said, and would have withdrawn, but Dita sprang from her seat and ran up to him.

"Jaquy, you not go away!" she cried—"come in—come in!" and lifting Fluff off the seat he occupied, she pushed Jaques into it, and deposited the little dog in his lap.

But Jaques saw no welcome in his master's eye, and he began hastily, "No, miss, dear—no." The bitterness would not be all hid, and he continued, "I have no welcome here now, but I thought I might take the liberty—that is, I thought you would like to know, sir, that I have got the place, and am to go to it on Tuesday week."

"I hope it is a good place, my lad," said Andrew, majestically, "and as comfortable as you deserve."



Nannie turned away her head to hide her tears. Dita looked very much puzzled; she again moved Fluff, and in spite of Jaques's efforts to the contrary, began to climb up into his lap.

"Go away—go where, Jaquy?" stroking his troubled face with her little hand.

"It is you who will go away, and will leave Jaques," said the lad.

"No, no, no, no," said the child; "Jaquy must come with me and Fluff. Daddy, Jaquy must come."

Jaques put her down and ran away; he would not let them see the tears running down his cheeks. Dita would not be comforted—she cried and sobbed till they did not know what to do with her. "I must have Jaquy—I must have Jaquy and Fluff."

Andrew fought hard against his better self to keep up his dignity, and to be firm and inflexible; but Dita's tears and entreaties prevailed, and he promised her that she should not be separated from Jaques.

"I will make him my private secretary, wife, and he can look after the library and buy books," said he.

Nannie slipped out of the room, and found Jaques sobbing in his little room; his delight and gratitude at hearing the good news were indescribable; he should not have to leave his beloved books, but be able to collect others; and, above all, he should not be parted from his beloved little lady, and the kind woman who had been like a mother to him.

When Nannie had comforted him, she went back to Dita, whom she found sitting on the floor, hugging her dog. Fluff was coiled up in her lap, unwitting that from his humble position he had become a landed dog.

## CHAPTER XIII.

ANDREW did not express the wish of his heart in words, which was that Nannie would leave the purchase of the house in his hands, without seeing it, or expressing any opinion as to its desirability. He knew that she would do all in her power to make him adopt a humbler and more modest style of life, and this he was determined not to do.

Nannie, however, perceived his wish, as she always did.

"Andrew, love, never mind me in settling it all. Though you know what I would like best, I am quite ready to think it all beautiful; so just you go your own way, and let it be a surprise to me."

"I think that is a wise decision," said he; "these things are more in my line than yours."

"Just tell me," she said, "who the people are that are selling it, dear; and why, if it is such an old place, they don't keep it for themselves?"

"The people are called Norton," he answered. "Sir John Norton has just died, and the estate becomes the property of his son Sir Edward, who is only a boy. Sir John was so deeply in debt that everything had to be sold,

and the place was not entailed, so it went also. The widow and Sir Edward Norton have an income of about £1500 a-year; they are to live in her dower house, the Grange, which is about five miles from the park gates."

"What park gates, love?"

"The lodge of Salford Abbey."

"And what have you done about furniture?"

"I have ordered it all to be bought as it stands; but Lady Norton, of course, has a great many things of her own, and all of these have been moved to the Grange, so we shall have some things to buy."

"Well, let me know, by-and-by, in good time, to pack for the flitting," said Nannie, "and I will not trouble you with more questions."

"The flitting indeed! I must beg, Mrs. Lovel, that you will not pack anything. The tables and chairs here are not fit for the scullery of Salford Abbey. Everything must begin brand-new. Mr. Smith has undertaken to engage servants for the whole establishment."

Nannie gave a little gasp. "How many must we have?"

"Here is the list."

"A lady's maid! what can I do with a grand lady to wait on me?"

"Why, let her wait on you, to be sure."

"Ah, well, she can help me with making Dita's things."

It was on the point of Andrew's tongue to say—"You must never make anything more for Dita;" but he suppressed the words, com-

forting himself by thinking that it would look maternal and interesting; but to poor Nannie it seemed that everything that she said or did was wrong: how should she teach herself? She took away the list to think over and study.

In the kitchen Dita and Jaques were sitting, the former making her slave tell her stories of the possessions she would soon call her own; of a pony to ride, and swans to feed, cows to see milked, and flowers to pick. They were all living in a world of unreality, and Nannie began to long for the crisis to be over.

Up to the present time, about once a-year, Master Malcolm had written from Dunmonaigh, asking for news of Assunta's child, whom he always called by the ceremonious name of Margaret Griselda, unwitting that her adopted parents had changed her name; and Andrew had been very careful always in keeping up the illusion. The fact that any one should know that his little Dita had been taken by him from the workhouse, was indescribably galling to him in his new circumstances; and when the annual letter arrived, he saw a way of cutting off the inquiries of the Minister, and causing him to lose sight of them altogether, as he carefully abstained from answering it, and left a commission with a neighbor to write after he had quitted Edgar Street, and say that Mr. Fairdon and his family had left the neighborhood—that they had assumed another name on inheriting a considerable property, and had left no address. The Minister was thus compelled to give up all intercourse with them, and it seemed as if every

tie was cut off between Perdita and her native country.

At last the great day came: little Dita was wild with excitement and delight, Andrew more pompous than ever, and poor Mrs. Lovel (for she had now fairly adopted her new name) quite shaky and tremulous. No one knew what it cost her to be dressed by the weeping Betty in that black silk gown which looked as if it might stand alone, in the black lace shawl and feathered bonnet; but the dress became her well, and the good taste of the dressmaker having come to her aid, she looked quite as she should do, and was free from superfluous trimmings.

Dita was all in white, with daisies in her hat. The child had an innate look of noble race; and the difference of dress did not alter her appearance.

It was settled that Mr. Lovel and Jaques should start first, and that Mrs. Lovel and Dita should follow by a train two hours later; thus Andrew could see that all was ready for their reception. He was very anxious that she should be pleased—more anxious than he cared to show, or even to allow to himself.

Nannie was met at the London station by a footman who touched his hat, and told her that he had taken their places. She would fain have carried her own bag, but it was civilly taken from her, and she followed in haste into the station.

It was a comfort when she, and the child, and Fluff, were safe in the train, and the footman

had given her the tickets. Dita could not sit still; she went from one window to another, and chattered, and felt certain that every station they passed must be the right one.

At last the long-expected name was shouted—Langford Junction—and the footman threw open the door. A small private omnibus with a pretty brown horse was standing outside.

"From Salford?" asked the man; and on hearing the answer in the affirmative, handed in Mrs. Lovel, and went back for the luggage. The coachman did not wait: the little omnibus was whirled away, and poor Nannie held Dita's hand fast in her nervousness, infecting the sensitive child with something like her own sensations.

Meanwhile, the footman, sorting his luggage, was accosted by a very grand lady, who asked him, condescendingly, what was waiting to take her to Salford Abbey. She told him that she was the new housekeeper, and was expected to arrive by this train. Going out of the station, Robert was astonished and dismayed by finding that the omnibus was gone, and a brougham waiting; he saw the mistake he had made, perceiving that the brougham must have come for the lady, and the omnibus for the housekeeper. However, it was too late to remedy the mistake, and Mrs. Poole got into the brougham and started on her drive.

Andrew and Jaques were waiting at the window watching for the travelers to come: when the omnibus came into view, they were astonished that it should have started first. A

footman came and told Andrew that Mrs. Poole had arrived, and had brought Miss Lovel with her: they had been shown into the housekeeper's room.

Andrew's heart misgave him, and bidding Jaques follow, he went down stairs, and found Nannie very much bewildered, not knowing where she was. The servants who were present did not know which way to look, but Nannie tranquilly took Dita's hand, and followed her husband up stairs; but she knew in her heart that it was an unfortunate beginning.

Salford Abbey retained much of its monastic character. It was a large low house, built round a square court filled with grass, and having in the center a stone well. The passages round this court had been cloisters, and their beautiful tracery had been kept in very good order, and was greatly admired. Glass windows closed the arches now, and glass doors opened on to the grass. The entrance into the front of the house was by a low door covered thickly with ivy: it darkened the window which gave light to the long, narrow, stone lobby into which it opened, so that the first effect on entering was one of darkness and gloom. This lobby ended in a low arch, before which hung a fine tapestry *portière*, and from thence you emerged into what had formerly been the refectory, and was now a large hall the full height of the house. This hall was the great beauty of Salford. It was paneled with black oak, and decorated with old armor and banners; over the chimney-piece was a fine trophy of arms, and the straight-



backed oak chairs were all covered with heraldic shields. Andrew Lovel had indeed achieved his wish to become possessor of an old feudal place. On one side of the hall was a row of low square windows which looked into the cloisters, and formerly opened into them, but were now filled with glass; each of these windows had a seat of most inviting character. A great oak table in the center of the hall was covered with flowers, and fine pots of pyramidal azaleas stood in the corners.

The hall was lighted by a great window in the east wall, filled with armorial bearings in stained glass.

Doors from the hall led to the more modern part of the house—to the drawing-rooms, and the dining-room—which was paneled with oak like the hall.

Nannie looked round and felt her heart sink, as it had never sunk before; in her happiest dreams she had thought of bright sunny rooms, clean crackling chintzes, lace anti-maccassars, and glittering chandeliers; but how unlike this was to what she had expected! A weight seemed to have fallen upon her; those dreadful black walls, this great resounding place—it oppressed her; she felt as if she could never be her own self there. It was better when the housemaid came to take her up to her own room. She left Dita with her husband, and followed the kind-looking Ann.

The staircase was of oak also, and very slippery, and Nannie had to hold fast by the broad banisters. Her room was in front of the house,

looking over an expanse of green park with fine trees. It was very grand, she felt, but she found that one of the little rooms opening into it was to be Dita's, and this was so dainty and pretty, all white dimity and rosebuds, that she could think no more of the gloom of the four-post bed with its canopy of yellow silk.

Ann was lingering about with a pained look on a most comely face, when it suddenly struck Mrs. Lovel what she was longing to say, but could not get out.

She put her hand on the woman's shoulder, and said, "Never mind ; I do not at all wonder at your taking me for the housekeeper—you will know me now."

She could not help her eyes filling with tears. Ann was much touched.

"Oh, ma'am, if I could only tell you how sorry I am."

"You need not mind," said Nannie, smiling an April smile ; "you see I have been in a humble position in life, and now that I am no longer young enough to change in everything, God has seen fit to send us great wealth—so I cannot hope to be like my husband, who is, as one may say, born to it ; but don't fret any more, and do your duty by me, as I will try to do mine by you." Ann went away, her mistress's friend for life.

## CHAPTER XIV.

THE next morning was brilliantly fine, the dew sparkling in the sun. When Mrs. Lovel rose, she threw open her windows, and stood enchanted by the beauty of the sweet, fresh country. The park was very undulating, the road crossed it for about half a mile, and then lost itself in woods. Near the house stood some large trees, at the entrance of a shrubbery, and under them the turf was of that thick velvety texture<sup>to</sup>, which no turf that is not very old will ever attain.

Nannie went in to call Dita; the child was tired with her journey, and still slept very soundly, with her round arms clasped over her head. Nannie woke her with many kisses, and she sat up rubbing her eyes.

"Oh, mammie, how pretty you look!" she cried; and Nannie found some pleasure in her pink dressing-gown, as the child admired it so much.

When she was dressed and had flown to the window with a cry of delight, Nannie felt a feeling of happiness that she had not known for a long time. It was delightful to be once more in the beautiful country.

When breakfast was over, Andrew said that

the agent, Mr. Smith, was coming to see him ; and he advised Mrs. Lovel to enter into a thorough examination of the house from head to foot. So Nannie's first day in her new home was a busy and pleasant one.

She summoned the housekeeper, who accompanied her on her rounds ; and they opened every door and every cupboard, examined wardrobes and chests of drawers, looked into the condition of the stores, and were thoroughly busy.

After luncheon, which was a terrible ordeal to Mrs. Lovel, Andrew took them out, and they visited the beautiful old-fashioned garden, with its yew-hedges and flower-beds, inlaid in green turf. They would have enjoyed this but for the gardener, who insisted on taking them over the whole place, and into every greenhouse and hothouse, gathering a splendid nosegay for Mrs. Lovel, and presenting it to her with an air as if all he surveyed was his own.

The man did not look happy ; in his heart he was very sad, for every one in the place had loved the Nortons, and the change was bitter. Nannie felt this instinctively, and shrank more into herself.

When she was tired with her unwonted exertions, she went home with Andrew, and Dita and Jaques and Fluff continued their explorations. They went across the park, and looked down into the lovely little trout-stream, so clear and swift, and followed it into the woods, where the silence was only broken by a chorus of birds and insects ; and the smells of the

bracken and wild-flowers almost intoxicated the little town-bred child.

As time passed on a trouble came on Nannie, of which she had never dreamt in her experience; this was that most devouring of troubles—*ennui*: she had nothing to do. After breakfast the cook would come for orders, and stay for perhaps ten minutes; then she took Dita out for a walk; but she was unused to walking, and got easily tired, and by eleven o'clock was glad to leave the child with her maid, and go home. Her own sitting-room was very pretty and sunny, and furnished with pleasant books; but she had no habit of reading, and her eyes were not so good as they used to be, and she wearied of her books. Andrew had bought her a fine piece of worsted-work, but she felt as if it would never be finished, and hated the regular pattern. She had no other resources. Oh for one morning of hearty scrubbing and washing up! She used to sing gayly at her work, with an eye on Dita's perilous amusements in the yard all the time. Oh to see Andrew once more in his black apron, struggling with difficult rhymes! His poetical irritability then was nothing to her: very different from the constant finding fault now, which only served to make her shy and awkward.

In these days Nannie's soft hair turned very gray, and her voice, from its old cheery sweetness, acquired a weakness in tone, and she spoke low, as those do who often cry by themselves in secret.

One of the most painful of the ordeals through which Mrs. Lovel had to pass was the visits of the neighboring families; for Andrew was so anxious that she should please them that it made her painfully nervous.

One day, about six months after they had been settled at Salford, a large party arrived, consisting of a neighboring landowner's wife, Mrs. Lee Aston, and her daughter, and a party of guests who were staying with them, who had wished to see Salford Abbey.

Nannie's heart sank within her when she saw how many there were. They were shown into the drawing-room, and her nervousness was so great that she could get out nothing but monosyllables.

Andrew was strolling about in the garden in a studied country gentleman's dress, and she received them alone.

The Lee Astons came expecting to be amused, and Andrew, when he came in, satisfied their fullest expectations. It seemed to Nannie that they were drawing him out, for he had never appeared to so little advantage. He took them round the old rooms and the cloister, pompously telling them the history of the place, which they knew far better than he did.

One of the party was a tall grave man, who seemed as if he did not enter into the joking and laughter of the younger people: he left Andrew to go round with his guests, and stayed behind with Mrs. Lovel.

"Have you met my sister-in-law yet, Mrs. Lovel?" he said.

"I do not know," she answered, "for I do not know your name."

He smiled. "I am Mr. Norton," he said; "Lady Norton is my sister-in-law, and I am the guardian to the boy."

"It seems very hard that this place should have left its rightful owner," said Nannie. He looked at her sharply, and then said kindly, "I am very glad that it has fallen into your hands. I wanted to ask a great favor of your husband, and that is, to allow my nephew to fish in the trout-stream. He is fond of fishing, and being home from Eton for the holidays, it will be a great resource to him."

"I am sure Andr—Mr. Lovel will be honored, delighted I mean—poor young gentleman."

"Lady Norton would call on you, I know, but she naturally shrinks from returning here under such different circumstances. There are a great many of the poor people in whom she is much interested, and about whom it would be the greatest comfort to her to talk to you. I wonder if I might ask you to call upon her?"

"If she would allow me—if she would not think it a liberty—I should be very glad."

The door opened and Dita bounded in, followed by her little dog. On seeing the stranger she stopped, and assumed a demure pace. It would be difficult to imagine a prettier sight than this child, with her great rare dark eyes and the floating cloud of golden hair, which made her like a fairy child.

Mr. Norton held out his hand, and she went up to him with a natural grace all her own.

"Your little girl, Mrs. Lovel?" he said, inquiringly.

"Yes, our little daughter," answered Nannie, stroking down the wild hair lovingly.

Mr. Norton felt surprised that anything so refined and fairy-like should have been born of humble parents; but he said no more, and the rest of the party returning, they took their leave.

They were driving through the woods when Miss Lee Aston cried out—

"Oh, look, mamma, there is an odd figure!"

Against a tall shadowy birch-tree stood Jaques with his violin in his hand waiting till the carriage should have passed, before he resumed the music his soul loved. Jaques's large hands and feet, his uncouth face, which looked rough-hewn and not finished off, caused an irresistible laugh. He heard, and even in his gentle soul arose a feeling of bitterness; but he comforted himself by the wildest and most fantastic manœuvre on his pet violin.

One day Dita came running into her mother's room with her face full of the excitement of news.

"Mammie, there's a 'ittle boy fishing—may I speak to him? oh, mammie, may I?"

Mrs. Lovel looked at her flushed, eager little face, and seeing how much it would delight her, consented: the boy could be no other than Edward Norton. Jaques was away in London transacting business for Andrew, and Dita was without playmates. Away she danced with Fluff at her heels, far outstripping the sober pace of her maid.



The boy sitting on the edge of the stream in the wood looked up at her with a furious frown as she danced up to him ; she was so taken aback that her poor little face fell piteously : he saw it, for he turned round and said—

“ Never mind, you’ve frightened him away, and he won’t come back : what do you want ? ”

But Dita was quite subdued, she only crept a little nearer and hung her head.

“ Well, out with it, little un. ”

Dita’s courage came back as fast as it had gone, and she sat down by him, and let a piece of string she held in her hand go into the water.

“ I fish, ” she said.

“ You are a funny little thing, ” said the boy, who was about twelve years old, and very handsome. “ What is your name ? ”

“ Dita, ” she said. “ I caught a fish, ” and she drew out a dead leaf.

“ Would you like to see my fish ? ” said the boy ; and opening his basket he showed to her wondering eyes the glittering silvery back of a pretty trout ; but alas ! the sight proved too exciting for the inquisitive nature of Fluff ; he darted forward, and would have thrust his nose into the basket, when a sharp push from the boy thrust him back. Fluff was a clumsy spoilt pet ; he rolled over, gave a little squeak, and subsided into the trout-stream.

“ Oh, Fluff ! ” shrieked Dita.

“ Be quiet, ” said the boy ; “ he will swim all right, ” and he stood for a moment watching ; then he saw to his consternation that Fluff’s superabundant coat was pulling him down, that

the hair covered his bead-like eyes, and that he was fighting with his paws above his head instead of below him. He stretched out a branch, but Fluff took no notice. Dita stood motionless with her little hands clasped together in despair. There was no time to lose, and the boy jumped into the water, and waded after the poor pet, catching him up just in time to save his life.

He carried him out, and Dita received Fluff wringing wet as he was into her lap and covered him with kisses and tears.

"You must run home," said the boy, standing dripping beside her; "and change your things, or you will catch cold——"

"Come home too," said Dita, rising and pulling his hand; but the boy drew it away roughly, and said with bitterness—

"Not I—it is your home now, not mine."

"Shall you be here to-morrow, boy?" said Dita.

"Yes, I will come and see whether you have caught cold."

Dita held up her face to be kissed, and then trotted away with Fluff in her arms, meeting her terrified maid on her way.

Just as they reached the door, Mr. Lovel came out and met them. His consternation was great on seeing the dripping condition of the child; her frock, everything in a deplorable condition, and he severely scolded the maid for losing sight of her charge, while Dita flew away to tell her story to "mammie." The little adventure bore important fruits. Dita must no

longer run wild; her education must begin. For one more happy unshackled month the child was free, getting into innumerable scrapes, and always spending a thoroughly happy part of the day with Edward Norton, who initiated her into all sorts of enchanting amusements, taught her to climb trees and to wade in the water, to know the names of the trees and flowers, to fish for hours with a crooked pin, to build moss-houses, etc. The country-bred boy found the greatest amusement in teaching this sweet little Cockney all the commonest knowledge of country life. Then the holidays came to an end, and Edward went off to his work, and Dita was caught up like a wild colt from the grass to be tamed and broken-in to harness. A governess arrived—a parcel of lesson-books, a piano and some globes; and one snug little room with windows opening into the cloister was turned into a schoolroom.

The old life in Edgar Street, Soho, had completely passed away—so completely that no one but the Lovels and Jaques knew that Dita was not their child. This was Andrew's strong wish, and Nannie was not experienced enough to see that it might lead to embarrassment in the future. When Dita was about twelve years old, she told her the outline of her parents' history, suppressing their names; and she was glad to have done so, as at that age the revelation was nothing compared to what it might have been in the future. It was curious to see the hereditary peculiarities developing themselves in the girl's character; the enthusiasm and strong powers of

loving and disliking of her mother's race—the chivalrous loyalty from her father. There was danger that she might become too romantic, too *exaltée*; but her faithful friend Jaques proved the best educator she could have. He directed her enthusiasm aright; he fed her imagination with truth, at once encouraging and restraining it; hours together she spent with him reading the books he chose for her. In vain the conventional governess appealed to Mrs. Lovel against this; she would not listen. She saw that there was a necessary craving in Dita's existence for great and chivalrous and beautiful things, and the wonderful tact and sympathy with which nature had endowed the uncouth Jaques taught this also to him: this want must be fed, or Dita would look round her for what she wanted, and in her nearest and dearest would learn and mark its absence. Her character developed slowly: she was generous and unselfish, full of sweetness and high religious tone; and though the time came (and Jaques alone knew that it must come) when she awoke to the fact that the parents whom she loved so very dearly were not such as she was, never by word or gesture, never even by admitting it to herself, did she betray it. She loved them perhaps all the more that the feeling roused up a feeling of protection of them from the whole world.

Dita grew and shot up; her long golden hair was woven into plaits, and she wore a pinafore. Each time that Edward Norton came home from school, he saw less of her, and pronounced her quite spoilt, and no fun: finally he never saw

her at all, and she passed on through the last stages of her schoolroom life.

A still greater change had come over her gentle mother. As year passed after year it took away a little more life, a little more energy. She was fading, very, very slowly—imperceptibly to all but Jaques, who through life had been her confidant, and who loved her dearly. He saw the refinement of ill-health stealing over her; he did not mistake the transparency of her hands for the delicacy produced by the life of a fine lady; and that she was always lying on the sofa more and more, told its own tale to him. Andrew was either too absorbed, or would not understand. Nannie was fading early while still in the prime of life: she was not clever, she was not strong, and the transplanting had wounded the tender little fibers, without which the life of the strongest plant grows faint.

Jaques lived with his mother in a pretty cottage just behind the garden; they lived humbly but very happily. Under his care the Salford library was becoming a rare and valuable one, and it flattered Andrew's vanity so much that learned men should write to him and ask for the favor of seeing his books, that in this one particular he permitted himself extravagance, and Jaques reveled in the works his *carte-blanche* enabled him to procure.

## CHAPTER XV.

"YES, she's a stunner!" pronounced Mr. John Lee Aston, commonly called Jack, the second son of the Lee Aston family.

A voice of a different calibre answered him coldly, "Whatever Miss Lovel may be, there is no standing the father."

"Money covers a multitude of sins," said Jack, laughing; "but there is no trace of the *parvenue* about the fair Perdita—she is the prettiest creature I ever saw; and as for manners, I have never seen her equal."

"She was a very pretty child," answered Sir Edward Norton. "But I have been abroad so long that I have only a slight recollection of her features; and only a strong recollection of that ass, her father, peppering me in the legs when your governor asked him to shoot in your coverts. I suppose he has not killed any one since?"

"He has never handled a gun since, poor old boy. I shall never forget his face when you tumbled down; it took half the nonsense out of him at a blow, and they say he is much improved."

"Well, then, my misfortune has proved good fortune for others, for he used to carry his gun like a walking-stick. I insured my life before I

accepted your invitation to stay here for this ball, as I thought you would want me to walk through the turnips to-morrow."

"I wish your mother would have come."

"She is very happy at the Grange with my uncle; and she drives over nearly every day to see Mrs. Lovel—it is the most wonderful infatuation."

"Is she not a great invalid?"

"That is what it is: it is partly a sort of charity visit, though I confess my mother is devoted to her."

"You will see the heiress to-night," said Jack.

"What! is she coming here?"

"Yes, it is her first ball."

"Hum!" Sir Edward gave a sort of growl and lighted a cigar; Jack followed his example, saying as he did so, hesitatingly—

"Ahem—a—I suppose it would not really stand in a fellow's way?"

"What?—I don't understand."

"Those sort of parents—want of family and birth; it's a confounded nuisance when everything else is so desirable."

"Do you wish for the young lady, or her money?" said Norton, coldly.

"Both," said the other. "I don't know exactly that I should have chosen a daughter of Andrew Lovel as a wife but for the money; but, by Jove! I never would marry money unless I cared very much for the possessor."

"Doänt thou marry for munny, but goä wheer munny is,"

said Norton, blowing a cloud of blue smoke into the air. "Well, you are wiser than I am; the

fact of a young lady being possessed of a large fortune makes me fight shy of her acquaintance. I have seen enough of that," he added, bitterly.

Edward Norton was very proud, and it had reached his ears that people coupled his name with the heiress's, and planned the return of the old place to the rightful family through this marriage. Even his mother had once imprudently given a very slight hint to that effect, which had been taken with the rapid swerve of a shying thorough-bred. He was far from pleased at hearing that he was to be under the same roof with this lady for two or three days.

"This is the last visit I mean to pay," he said, decidedly. "I must go to London and buckle-to. If a fellow has his own way to make in the world, he must not waste time, but plod along the road to fortune."

"I have the same road before me," said Jack, kicking a pebble out of his way.

"But you seem inclined to take a short cut, Jack."

"It saves a long, dry, dusty grind with one leap."

"Well, I wish you good luck. Shall we go in? It must be five o'clock, and I must take off my boots before joining the ladies."

Edward Norton threw away his cigar and went up stairs. His handsome dark face was overcast and gloomy as he pulled off his boots and threw them viciously across the room. It was unbearable that the very first thing that happened on returning to his own country, should be the overthrow of his plans for care-



fully avoiding any intercourse with the inhabitants of his old home. He imagined to himself that the object of Jack Lee Aston's admiration must be a blooming, rosy girl, stout and fair-haired, with all the want of refinement to be expected from one of Andrew's race. It was some years since they had met. The later Eton holidays, and all Oxford vacations, had been spent by Sir Edward with his uncle, Mr. Norton, and abroad with his mother. Lady Norton had encouraged him to be very much with his uncle: she feared lest the haughty and somewhat imperious spirit of her son would be marred for want of a father's authority. In some ways Mr. Norton was the best guardian he could have, but by no means in all. He was a cold man, just and upright, and gained his nephew's strong esteem; but he had almost as strong a share of the hereditary family pride as Sir Edward himself, and involuntarily encouraged it in the boy. No one guessed how bitterly Edward regretted Salford. Like most imaginative people, he had a passionate love for home. Lady Norton, a kind-hearted but rather weak woman, found herself unable to cope with her son's faults, so she contented herself with drawing out and strengthening his merits, and consoled herself with the thought that these faults were those of a generous-minded but untamed nature, and that rough contact with the world would tone them down. Her one injudicious hint about Dita Lovel had rankled in his mind; he looked upon his mother's friendship for Mrs. Lovel as an infatuation; and so sensitive was

he on the subject of the Lovels, that he was half inclined to think that all were combined in a conspiracy to compel him to marry the heiress. A kind of stiff shyness made him blush as he walked down stairs, and feel furious that he was doing so. There was a great deal of laughing and chattering going on in the drawing-room. Meta Lee Aston, a young lady no longer young, was seated at the piano with all the younger members of the party round her: they were trying to sing a glee, "Let the bumper toast go round," and enjoying the mistakes they made.

Mrs. Lee Aston, Miss Ashburn, her elder sister, and Mrs. Arthur, the eldest son's wife, were seated round the tea-table.

Sir Edward possessed himself of the 'Pall Mall,' and sank into a large arm-chair by a reading-lamp.

The singing continued. "Here's a health to all good lasses" in a shrill treble all out of place; and a very uncertain bass began something about a bumper toast. The accompanist took her hands off, and the unlucky man was heard to roar out "lads and lasses fill your glasses" before he could stop his ponderous voice. Being very young, his voice was uncertainly powerful, and burst out like the notes of an irregularly blown organ.

Then the door opened, and there was a bustle of fresh arrivals. Lord and Lady Armine, and Miss Grethard, their daughter, and behind them Mr. and Miss Lovel.

There was a great coming forward and shak-

ing of hands, and offers of tea, and then every one subsided into their place—the gentlemen with their backs to the fire (for it was September, and the evenings chill), and the ladies taking off their gloves and drinking tea.

Dita sat close to Mrs. Arthur (as she was always called), a pretty little comfortable woman, whose great wish was that every one should be happy round her, and who thought that her greatest contribution toward the entertainment of her mother-in-law's guests, was to take them up to see her four fat children in bed. She was very kind, and in a soft, purring voice put Dita at her ease; for it is formidable, even to the experienced, that arrival in a hot room at tea-time, when every one is at home and amused, and the guest comes in dazzled from the darkness outside, and finds it difficult to recognize friends in the glare of light—and the tea seems supernaturally hot; but Mrs. Arthur's soft remarks enabled her to swallow the bread-and-butter she was too shy to refuse.

Sir Edward's eyes, in spite of himself, wandered to Miss Lovel; but she sat with her back to him, and he could only see a large sombrero hat, the shadow of which hid even her hair. He was not acquainted with the Armines, and he did not think it worth while, after the first civil rise from his seat on their entrance, to move from his comfortable chair.

Sooner than usual, Mrs. Lee Aston rose, and said in her cheery voice, "As dinner is at seven to-night, I am sure you will like to go up and rest a little now; I have ordered the carriages

at nine, for Lady Waldon is very anxious that her ball should begin early. Mary, my dear, if you are going up stairs, will you show Miss Lovel her room?"

Perdita followed Mrs. Arthur up stairs to her comfortable little room, where she found her maid already unpacking.

"Do we dress before dinner, or after?" she asked.

"Oh, as you like; a muslin or something slight for dinner for you young ladies, for fluffy ball-gowns get so crushed. I shall dress before;" and the good little woman trotted away.

When the gong sounded, Andrew came for his daughter, as she had made him promise to do, and she followed him shyly down stairs.

Most of the guests were assembled, and Mrs. Lee Aston said, that as dinner was at an irregular time, they would wait for no one, but that they had better go in without ceremony. The result was a little gentle rush, and Perdita found herself taken in by Jack Lee Aston. There was a vacant seat on the other side, for one of the unpunctual guests, and this remained empty till the soup was nearly over, when Sir Edward Norton came in; he looked hastily round the table—there was no escape, and he sat down by her, and unfolded his napkin.

"Please go on," said Dita to her right-hand neighbor, who was telling her the names of all the party.

"How far did I get? the lady in pink silk you know, my sister-in-law."

"Yes, and then Mr. Greville with the bass

voice, and then Miss Grethard—I know them, of course; and then?”

“Those two men are Captain Johnstone and Colonel Palmer; then, of course, my mother, Lord Armine, Major Steele, a brother officer of Arthur’s, and then my aunt, Miss Ashburn.”

“And next to me?” whispered Dita.

“Norton, I think you are not acquainted with Miss Lovel? Sir Edward Norton—Miss Lovel,” said Jack, aloud; Norton bowed very stiffly, and turning to Miss Ashburn, asked her if she had been out driving.

Miss Ashburn was very deaf with one ear, and Jack felt himself revenged when she produced a long tube from her pocket, and thrusting one end into her ear where it stuck of itself, she presented the mouthpiece to her neighbor.

Jack could not suppress a little giggle, and Dita pursed up her mouth vigorously, not to smile.

Sir Edward’s question produced a long disconnected answer, and then he set himself to eating, and between dishes to examining the *menu* with so very decided an intention not to speak, that Perdita could not but perceive it, though Jack kept her employed the whole time listening to him.

Fortunately for Sir Edward, dinner was hurried over, and the young ladies went away to dress. The gentlemen amused themselves by knocking about the billiard-balls in the hall, and the elder ladies warmed themselves and drank coffee; little Mrs. Arthur stole away to the nursery.

At nine o'clock, the carriages were announced, and the young ladies reappeared, their beauty hidden by cloaks and shawls. Mrs. Lee Aston wrapped up Miss Ashburn first in a Shetland shawl, then in an Indian *chuddar*, and lastly in a huge fur tippet, and they started.

Perdita's feet were dancing the whole way, and her eyes sparkling; no excitement in her hitherto tranquil life had ever equaled this going to her first ball.

## CHAPTER XVI.

THAT first sound of music on the staircase which announces that dancing has begun, —what a thrill of excitement it produces in the heart of the young *débutante* !

Dita followed Mrs. Lee Aston and her flock of ladies into the ball-room. She felt quite bewildered with the brilliancy of the scene, and was only aroused by Mr. Lovel leading her forward and introducing her proudly to their hostess, Lady Waldon ; and she saw the face of a very pleasant-looking old lady smiling kindly at her and saying, "I hope you like dancing, my dear ; all young people should like dancing."

Then she was hurried off by Jack, and whirled into the valse.

Perdita excited extreme admiration ; her kind hostess was literally besieged by gentlemen, all asking to be introduced to her, and eager for the privilege of dancing with her.

"Do you never dance, Sir Edward?" said Mrs. Arthur, in her cooing voice.

"Very seldom—I cannot see the pleasure of skipping about for nothing."

"Oh dear ! but then young people must be amused."

"It is not a rational amusement."

"Were you always so rational? What a dreadful boy you must have been!" said Lady Waldon, coming up to them.

Edward was forced to laugh, and the laugh dissipated a little of his cross humor. "Come," she went on, "I think too well of you not to think that you can be irrational sometimes. Why, the Spartans themselves unbent——"

"Only when the period of decadence commenced," answered Sir Edward. "But I am no Spartan, perhaps more of a philosopher——"

"Then you must be driven from your tub! A tub at your age, goodness me! Let me secure you a charming partner to exercise your fascinations upon."

"No, no, Lady Waldon; conquests are for Alexander"—and he pointed to Jack, who was again dancing with Dita—"and philosophy for me——"

"Ah! is not that as good as saying that were you not Diogenes you would be Alexander? It must need all your philosophy to resist the chance of dancing with anything so lovely."

"I have scarcely seen Miss Lovel," said he, very coldly.

"Oh, Diogenes, still in thy tub!" and she laughed and left him, determined on revenge.

He was still standing where she had left him when Lady Waldon suddenly came up to him and said—

"Sir Edward, allow me to introduce you to Miss Lovel—she is disengaged for this dance."

He could do nothing but ask her to dance, which he did in the most formal manner. To



his astonishment she refused. He bowed, and stepped back. At that moment the music began, and Major Steele came swiftly through the crowd, with his head in the air, as if seeking some one, and seeing Miss Lovel, asked her to dance, and she went gayly away with him.

Edward Norton felt exceedingly mortified. She had refused him, and accepted this commonplace little officer at once. It was the Lancers, and Perdita was close to him in the dance. Very much displeased, he watched her, and in spite of himself could not help admitting that she was pretty.

Edward Norton's taste was very fastidious, and it was gratified by the perfection of Dita's whole appearance. Her dress, made by the very best French dressmaker, had that degree of finish about it which is so rare in England; gloves, shoes, and fan all of one tint. Her beautiful wavy hair was braided in very large soft plaits; on her brow it rippled and curled naturally. Her complexion was brilliantly white, with a wild-rose tinge on the cheeks and lips; but the most remarkable feature was that wonderful pair of dark eyes—like the eyes of a gazelle—shaded by dark lashes, and full of varying expression.

Norton's "pretty," was but hesitatingly pronounced, for he was truthful even to himself, and it seemed to him, in spite of himself, that his eyes had never rested on anything more lovely.

When the dance was over he went across to where Dita had seated herself, and said, very sternly—

"May I have the pleasure of this valse, Miss Lovel?"

"No, thank you," she said, quietly.

"Are you already engaged?"

"No; that is, not yet."

He stood gloomily beside her for a moment, and then said, "So I am the only person with whom you refuse to dance."

She opened her eyes very wide, but said nothing. He repeated his words in the shape of a question. "Am I the only person with whom you refuse to dance; and if so, why?"

"Because you do not really wish to dance with me," said Dita, with spirit. "I saw you did not, and only asked me because you could not help it. Indeed I do not care for dancing so very much that I would dance with you against your will," and she blushed at the length of her explanation.

"But I do wish you to dance with me, very much," said Sir Edward, haughtily.

"Merely the spirit of contradiction," answered Dita, as haughtily. She was a spoilt child, and could not brook his tone of superiority. She sat while that delicious valse went on, tapping her foot on the floor. No one asked her to dance, for seeing Sir Edward by her side they imagined her to be engaged to him, but he did not move.

"I am sorry that you should think such a thing," he said, slowly; "my face must be one very easily read."

He did not perceive that he had betrayed himself; but she did.

"Yes, very easily read," she said.

He did not like it at all. He stood by her without speaking, looking at the dancing, and she became more and more impatient.

At that moment Jack Lee Aston came back from taking a lady down to supper, and, springing toward Dita, he said—"You are not dancing, and this is such a perfect valse. May I have the pleasure?" and they plunged into the maze.

"They are well matched," said Edward Norton to himself; and he bit his lips and asked Mrs. Arthur whether she would have some supper.

"Oh, how sorry I am that it is over!" cried Dita, as, muffled in her white fur cloak, she was put into the omnibus by her last partner.

"Good night—good night," and they started on their way home.

"Have you enjoyed it much, my dear?" said Mrs. Lee Aston, kindly.

"Oh! more than I can possibly say."

"She is silly and frivolous," thought Sir Edward. "What a fuss to make about a ball!"

All the elders, excepting Mrs. Lee Aston, had already gone on, and the last carriage contained nothing but young people, and their hostess.

"It has been a capital dance," said Meta; "the Waldons' balls are always good."

"I don't think they ever gave so good a one before," said Jack; "by Jove! it's half-past four, and awfully light."

By degrees the remarks grew fewer and fewer, and at last ceased; most of the party dozed, and there arose a delicate little ladylike snore from the corner in which Meta reposed.

There were about five miles to drive, and

when they had gone about three, they had to pass a railway bridge, and drive alongside of the line for about ten yards.

Sir Edward was at the end of the omnibus, very far from sleepy, and looking backward, he saw the train coming; there were the two brilliant red lights of the night express, and as it drew near there arose a shrill whistle from the engine. Jack woke up instantly, saying in a low voice—

“These horses won’t stand that.”

Dita sat up and looked at the two men; the pace of the carriage was increasing, the horses first cantering, then galloping hard.

Mrs. Lee Aston started up in terror, and clutched hold of her daughter and Miss Grethard.

“Jack, Jack,” she said, “why are we going so fast? tell Bolton I will not be driven at this pace. Can’t you tell him?”

“Hush, mother,” said Jack, “don’t be afraid; the horses have been frightened by the train—they will stop in a moment.”

Meta began to cry, and Miss Grethard and Mrs. Lee Aston clasped each other; only Perdita said nothing, but sat quite still. The pace increased more and more, the omnibus swaying frightfully from side to side.

Meta gave utterance to a wild scream. Dita leant suddenly forward and whispered to Sir Edward—

“Would it not be better to open the windows?”

“Yes, you are quite right;” and he proceeded

to do so in spite of the rush of cold air which came in.

"There is a goodish piece of straight road up to the home farm," said Jack between his teeth to Sir Edward; "but the corner is bad, if he cannot pull up there."

The carriage rushed on more and more wildly. Something dark seemed to flash by them.

"That fool James has jumped off!" exclaimed Jack. "He must be killed, at this pace." He leaned across Miss Grethard, stretched out of the window, and shouted out—

"Any chance of pulling up, Bolton?" There was no answer, for the man's whole strength was required; but a side view of the horses with their heads well down and the foam flying from their bits, told its own tale.

Jack drew his head in, and looking at Sir Edward, gave an almost imperceptible shake of the head. Perdita saw, and her face grew paler still; she suddenly bent forward and touched Sir Edward's hands, and stooping very close to him, whispered—

"Sir Edward."

"Yes."

"I did not mean to be cross."

His answer was to squeeze her little fingers very tight—then there was a violent rocking, they were pitched from one side to another—a terrific crash, and she knew no more.

Jack Lee Aston was the first to emerge from the wreck of the omnibus, and being very active and slight, and moreover having had the good luck to be on the uppermost side, he was able

to scramble sideways out of the door. With the help of the coachman, who limped very much, but had escaped without serious injury, he succeeded in freeing the horses, who remained quiet, trembling violently. Then they proceeded to extricate the ladies one after the other. Dita was taken out quite insensible and laid on the grass, then Miss Grethard and Meta—the latter screaming frightfully.

Mrs. Lee Aston was so unnerved that she entreated to be allowed to die quietly. Edward Norton had scrambled and dragged himself out, and when in the open air, to every one's astonishment, fainted away. Meta's screams gradually subsided, and she sat sobbing at the side of the road.

Mrs. Lee Aston once on her feet was quite herself again, and she and Mabel Grethard, who was much shaken and very pale, set to work to try and restore the two who appeared to be most severely hurt.

The coachman mounted one of the horses, and leading the other, rode off for assistance.

In about five minutes Perdita opened her eyes; it was a strange scene—the sky was just beginning to glow with the first gleams of sunrise, and the grass and road were all brilliant with hoar-frost. They were not really far from home; but the park wall divided them from the park, and there would be nearly a mile to skirt it before they could arrive at the lodge. The inhabitants of the farm were unfortunately only women—the farmer had gone for the night to

some distant market-town, and the laborers had all gone home to their cottages.

Perdita found Mabel Grethard and Jack both bending anxiously over her, and she tried to smile and attempt to sit up, but she could not help giving a cry of pain, and fell back again.

"Where are you hurt, dear? can you tell me?" asked Mabel.

"I am afraid my leg is broken, it feels very odd," said Dita.

"Oh dear! dear! what a time they are in coming!" sobbed Meta.

Mrs. Lee Aston was kneeling by Edward Norton, putting eau-de-Cologne to his brow, and chafing his hands; but there was not the slightest sign of returning consciousness.

It seemed ages before the carriage arrived with Mr. Lee Aston, Arthur, and poor Andrew, all in the keenest anxiety. Perdita was lifted in, and the ladies followed her.

Arthur and Jack together appropriated the largest blankets in the farm, and extemporized a sort of litter, on which they placed the inanimate form of Sir Edward Norton. Several men had arrived by this time from the house and the stables, and they started home with their burden as fast as they could go. Before they set out, the footman, who had jumped off, made his appearance in a most deplorable condition; his life had been saved almost by a miracle: he had thrown himself on the top of a hedge, which had broken the fall: his face and hands were torn and scratched, his clothes almost in

ragged, and covered with blood; but there seemed to be no serious injury.

Another messenger was sent off for the doctor, who arrived very quickly, but not before the principal sufferers had been taken up into their rooms.

He pronounced Perdita's leg to be broken—a simple fracture, of no very great consequence. She went through the setting with heroism, holding Mrs. Lee Aston's hand the while. Over Edward Norton he would not pronounce at once. The arm was very badly broken and wrenched; he had had one elbow out of the window when the carriage upset, and the injury was a very bad one. But the long insensibility might mean internal injury; he could not say at once. He prepared to stay with him until his return to consciousness; but before anything else, made Jack swallow brandy - and - water freely.



## CHAPTER XVII.

**B**ROKEN legs and arms take a long time to get well, especially when accompanied by such a shaking as the two invalids had undergone. It was quite three weeks before they were allowed to come down stairs, and even then they were both kept upon sofas, and forbidden to move more than was absolutely necessary.

The autumn had changed into winter—cold, bright, and frosty—and they pined to be allowed to go out, and grew tired of always reading.

In the beginning of her illness, Mrs. Lovel was able to come for a short time to see Perdita; but after staying a few days, she felt obliged to return home, for a recurrence of the palpitation of the heart, to which she was so subject, made her nervous lest she also should be laid up there. There was a change coming over Andrew now; he looked far older, and lost much of the self-confidence for which he used to be so conspicuous. The truth was, that his eyes were at last opening to the fact that Nannie was ill, very ill; that the doctors looked grave after seeing her, and gave him their opinion in unmeaning phrases.

In the absence of Perdita they were thrown

more together than they had been for many years. One day Andrew even called his wife Nannie again, and the color flushed into her face, and the tears into her eyes, with joy. He came and sat down on the sofa beside her, and she leant her head on his shoulder.

"You know it now, honey, do you not?" she said, softly.

"Know what?"

"That I never can be well."

"That is nonsense, my dear," he said, hurriedly. "We will go to some German baths in the early summer; they will make you as strong as ever."

"Maybe," said Nannie, sighing—it seemed to her dreadful to go away from home on a long journey—"maybe: but it seems to me that I would rather die here quietly than away in foreign places."

"You are weak, and it makes you low," he said, eagerly—"what Dr. Grant calls unconquerable nervous depression; nothing like German waters for that. We'll have you as strong as ever, sweetheart."

"Andrew, do you mind the little back-yard, where Dita used to play?"

"Ay."

"And the swing you made of my mother's old rocking-chair, and the child's beautiful hair that you loved so, and I would so lief have cut off? I am glad I let it grow."

Andrew shaded his eyes with his hand: why would she talk of all these things now?

"And your play, Andrew, will it ever be

finished? I fear me, never, though it was grand enough then, when we were but humble. You never read Shakespeare now, Andrew?"

"I have no time now," said he, in a stifled voice.

"No," she said, thoughtfully, "no time. Riches bring troubles and cares and weariness more than joys."

"Not to me," he said.

"You do not know it yet," she said, softly; "not yet. But we were happier then; I was a better wife then than I have been since."

"Oh, Nannie, Nannie!"

"It is a long time ago," she went on, "I remember, years ago, that my father went over to Alderney and brought me home for a dairy pet a young heifer from there. Oh, she was a pretty creature was Daisy! her coat was like satin, and her eyes for all the world like our Dita's; but she did not live. The food was very rich, she was kept like a princess, and housed against storm and rain; but she grew thinner and thinner, and pined away. She missed the old scenes she loved; the friends of her youth; the poor shed in which she had lived. Some could bear it, but she could not, nor could I."

"Nannie, wife, you do not think of me. What should I do, were you to go?"

"You will have Dita, honey, and she is a more fit companion for you than poor humble Nannie."

"Ah! she is not of us—she too will fly away. Nannie, wait a little time for me; let us go together."

She stroked his cheek gently with her hand, feeling the hot tears running down. "All in God's good time, honey," she said, softly.

It was a brilliant October day, keen, fresh, and invigorating, and all the Lee Aston party were out excepting the two invalids.

It seemed to Sir Edward a wayward fate that he should thus be forced into daily companionship with the very young lady he had been most anxious to avoid, but it was inevitable.

On the first day of Perdita's reappearance down stairs, Jack had tried his chance with her, and failed. The events of that unfortunate night had increased his admiration for Miss Lovel to genuine love, and he took away with him on a fishing expedition in Norway a sharper pain in his honest heart than his friend at all suspected.

Meanwhile the boasted philosophy of Edward Norton was in danger: he could not help passing hours in the day with Perdita; he had tried being wheeled into the billiard-room, but a great deal of shooting was going on, and the men were constantly out, and as he did not at all relish solitude, he returned to the drawing-room, where he and Perdita were placed on opposite sides of a window, and enjoyed many a hearty laugh over the absurdity of the position, especially when a visitor was announced whom neither could rise to receive—for Norton was even less able to move than Dita, the doctors pronouncing that to keep his shoulder motionless was of the utmost importance.

On one occasion, all the party being out, each

took up a book, and for a time only the ticking of the clock broke the silence. At last Sir Edward, who had furtively been watching Dita for some minutes, began—

“Miss Lovel.”

“Yes.”

“Is your book amusing?”

“No;” and she stifled a yawn.

“Then do put it down and talk, I am so bored.”

“So am I, but I was too polite to say so.”

“I beg your pardon, Miss Lovel—what are you reading?”

“‘The Widow’s Bequest.’”

“Trash, is it not?”

“I suppose it is; but I have read so few novels that, generally speaking, even trash amuses me.”

“It must be very nice to be so easily amused,” said Sir Edward, languidly.

“I have a piece of gossip in my pocket,” said Dita, eagerly, “that I am sure will interest you. Mrs. Lee Aston had a letter from Lady Armine.”

“A marriage?”

“Quite right, Mabel Grethard is engaged to be married.”

“Who is the happy man? Lucky for him that he did not hear the eldritch yell that she uttered in the carriage.”

“No, no, no!” cried Dita, laughing, “that was Meta; and I do not at all wonder at her being frightened.”

“Yes, I apologize; of course it was. Miss Grethard was very quiet and useful also.”

"And Meta's shriek was very pardonable."

"But it was on *terra firma* she shrieked—Jack told me so," he continued.

"Nonsense!"

"You were insensible, Miss Lovel, so you cannot know."

"So were you insensible," she said, gayly.

"Well, Jack had all his wits about him, and he thought she had fainted; and when he went to lift her up, she uttered so sudden a scream that he fell backward. But to return to your news, who is the lucky man?"

"His name is Macmonach—Angus Macmonach—and he is a very rich Scotch laird, with a fine old castle called Dunmonaigh, in a most beautiful part of the country."

"Highly satisfactory: any drawbacks?"

"He is not as young as she might have wished, Lady Armine says," said Dita. "I think him a very good age; I don't like very young people—he is forty-five."

"And she?"

"Eighteen; it is certainly a great difference."

"He has been a long time making up his mind," said Sir Edward.

"You are determined not to take my piece of news nicely," said Dita, laughing; "but it is deeply interesting to me. Though I have seen so little of her, Mabel is the only girl-friend I have—she is so good and merry and charming, and she is very pretty."

"Really, do you think so?"

"Yes, I admire her lovely brown hair, and

her eyes; and she was very kind to me," said Dita, eagerly.

"Is anybody ever unkind to you?" said Sir Edward, impulsively.

"Oh yes, you were."

"I! What can you mean?"

"Nothing," said Perdita, blushing rosy red with confusion; "I did not mean to say it."

"I know what you mean," said he; then he suddenly bit his lips and stopped.

"You must have taken a great dislike to poor little me," said Dita, with a very little touch of pathos in her voice.

"Dislike! Miss Lovel, would to heaven that——"

Again he stopped himself. Perdita went on hurriedly—

"You once did a very kind thing for me, for which I feel grateful now."

"I am so glad," he answered, recovering himself. "What was it?"

"You saved my little dog from a watery grave."

"Oh, I had quite forgotten it; it was one of those little beasts made of wadding, was it not? I remember how it kicked."

"I think it would have broken my heart to have lost Fluff then," said Dita. "It was bad enough when I was older."

"When did it die?"

"About six years ago, when I was twelve years old."

"Old enough to be more stoical."

"I was very far from being stoical; I cried

more in two days than I ever cried in my whole life, before or since."

"Is it stuffed?"

"Oh yes, Jaques had it stuffed, and it is in my bedroom at home."

"Happy Fluff to be so mourned. What a very pretty little girl you were at the time of Fluff's adventure!"

"Yes, I must have been quite a little darling! I have seen my picture, with such a cloud of hair!"

"You were not nearly so nice afterward. I remember you asking me what was the principal river in Japan, and being quite scandalized when I did not know; and then your hair was done up, and you never would climb, or fish, or paddle, and had that straight-backed Miss Grimes always with you."

"Poor Miss Grimes, who always prided herself on her ladylike deportment; I fear I gave her a great deal of trouble."

"By-the-by, what has become of your faithful follower, the big man with the red hair?"

"Jaques? Oh, he is all right; he lives with his mother and looks after the books. He plays the violin divinely: have you ever heard him?"

"No, never. Is he as great a curiosity as ever?"

"Oh no, he only looks a very quiet and rather bent student; and as he has grown such a large red beard, you would hardly know him."

"And are you still as fond of him as you used to be?"

"I should think so! I love him, dear old



Jaques. He taught me far more than Miss Grimes did, and he is my mother's most devoted friend!"

"I hope she is better now?" asked Sir Edward.

"She is always much about the same," answered Dita, sadly. "Poor dear mother!"

"My mother is very fond of her," said he.

"Yes, she is the greatest comfort to poor mammie; I do not know what she would do without her daily visits; and it is so very kind of her not to mind coming to Salford Abbey."

They were on dangerous ground, and Dita caught herself up quickly. She feared that she must have hurt his feelings, for he said nothing for some minutes, then—

"I suppose you will go to London this spring?"

"No, we are going to Badfeld for the baths; Dr. Grant thinks that they will do my mother good."

"What a nuisance!—I mean for you."

"Oh no; I shall enjoy the fun of it: it will be quite new to me."

They went on talking till the walking-party came in and tea was ordered. Every one was full of Mabel Grethard's marriage. Arthur had once met Angus Macmonach when shooting in the north of Scotland, and had been invited to pass a night at Dunmonaigh. He said that Lady Armine's admiration was by no means exaggerated; and described the position of the grand old house, with the heather-clad hills pro-

tecting it from behind, and the deep, clear loch in front.

"Miss Grethard will be a strangely modern element in that romantic old place," he said, "with her Paris boots and gloves. I am glad Macmonach is to be married; it would have been sad for that good old family to have died out."

"What sort of a man is he?" asked Mrs. Arthur.

"He is a very queer, quiet fellow. It is a curious case of defeated ambition. The man is exceedingly clever, but he is *manqué*."

"How sad!" said Mrs. Lee Aston, sealing a letter.

"In what way do you mean?" asked Per-dita.

"It is difficult to say why. He tried elaborate farming, and was defeated by the impossibility of cultivation in that grand mountain country, that ran away with money, destroyed the peat that is absolutely essential for fuel, and frightened the game. Then he tried Parliament—he made some able speeches in his first session. He was a Conservative, of course; and at the last election a loud-talking Radical went down to Dunmonaigh, and defeated him on his own ground—an unheard-of catastrophe; but they say the family influence has gone rapidly down of late—they used to carry all before them."

"Is he unpopular?"

"Undoubtedly. He is a very odd man, with a sort of irritability about him. He calls his

people by the wrong names, and knows nothing about them or their families."

"That never answers in Scotland," said Meta.

"No, indeed, it tries the stanchest loyalty. His mother is a magnificent specimen of the feudal *chatelaine*."

"Let me see—who was she?" said Mrs. Arthur.

"A Fitz-James; they have royal blood in their veins. She must have been very handsome, and is now one of the grandest-looking old ladies I ever saw, but so dignified that Mabel's life will be a burden to her at first."

"Is this Angus the only son?" asked Sir Edward.

"Yes; there was another, but he died—was killed hunting or something, not long after his father's death."

"Poor Lady Griselda," said Mrs. Lee Aston, kindly.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE next morning was so fine that every one went out except Mrs. Lee Aston and the invalids; the former had letters to write and retired to her sitting-room, after seeing that her guests were well supplied with books. Edward Norton, who had passed a sleepless night, was disposed to be melancholy. Perdita, on the contrary, was in brilliant spirits.

"I am to get upon crutches to-morrow," she said, gayly; "and once upon crutches, I may as well pack up my goods and chattels, and relieve Mrs. Lee Aston of my most troublesome presence."

"I wish I could be tinkered up as easily as you," said Sir Edward, moving uneasily.

"But your shoulder is going on all right, is it not?" said Dita, anxiously.

"I hope so—oh!" he became suddenly very pale.

"What is it? Can I help you?"

"If I come to you, do you think that you could move my bandage? it is displaced there to the right. Oh, thank you; by Jove! it did hurt." As he knelt beside her, she gently put the bandages right.

"Go and lie down," she said, "and keep perfectly quiet; you do not look well to-day."

"Don't I? Well, I never closed my eyes all night with the pain. I think Griffiths has tied me up too tight, or something; it seems to get worse every day." And he lay back on his sofa, looking pale and exhausted.

Presently he began again, "Do you think me a great muff, Miss Lovel? I am a very bad hand at bearing pain."

"I know that some people are much more sensitive than others, and in consequence actually suffer more."

"That is quite true. There was a poor fellow whom I knew once who actually died of pain."

"What a terrible thing!"

"I think very serious pain would soon put an end to me," he said.

"No, that could only happen in rare cases. I think people must get used to suffering after a time."

"I think people ought to be allowed to put their friends out of pain quietly, when it is beyond endurance."

"It would be a very tempting power," said Dita, half laughing. "Supposing I had put you out of your pain quietly just now, what would your feelings have been?"

"Perhaps it would have been as well," said Sir Edward, gloomily.

"More comfortable for you than for me. But seriously," she said, "I always think that the natural clinging to life which we all have,

in spite of pain, trouble, and sickness, is a special gift from God."

"Do you think so?" said he. "I had always looked upon it as an additional trouble, adding to the horrors of death."

"That is not my view," said Dita, gravely. "Our business is to live, and to live properly, and to do a certain amount of duty and service during our life. If the service were very, very hard, and we were weary and in pain, our longing for death would be overpowering, and would perhaps unfit us to bear the burden, were it not for that instinctive love of life with which we are endowed."

"Is it love of life, or is it fear of the physical terrors of dying—the shrinking of the human soul from the borders of the Unknown Land?"

"I think," said Perdita, "that they are all part of the instinct I speak of. The holiest man I ever knew," she continued, reverently bending her head, "was the bishop who confirmed me. I only saw him once or twice, but no one could be with him without carrying away some good, some wish to be better. And he, this great man, who lived like a saint, had a great dread of death, surely sent to prevent him from yearning to leave the world in which his life was so valuable."

"And is he dead?" asked Edward, deeply interested.

"Yes, he is dead. He was spared the knowledge that he was dying: he slept on earth and awoke in heaven."

Edward sighed. "I believe you are right,"

he said; "and to take a more practical view, it would be a selfish thing to wish to die merely for your own comfort—that is, should you leave friends to regret you."

"How does your arm feel now?" asked Dita, changing the subject.

"It hurts me so much," he answered, "that I think the sooner I can run up to London and have it looked after the better. But do not disturb yourself, Miss Lovel; it is much more comfortable than it was."

"I hope it has been properly set," said Dita, anxiously.

"I do not feel sure: when I tell Griffiths of the continuous pain he looks surprised, and that is suspicious; but I have got it into an easy attitude just now."

"I am so glad," and Perdita took up her book.

"Oh, you are not going to read? That is too bad!" he cried.

"We talk so much," said Dita, "that I consider that I ought to read a little sometimes."

"Not just now," said he, imploringly. "You can read when the people come in."

Dita laughed. "I am expecting a visitor this morning," she said.

"Who?"

"Jaques."

"Is his real name Jaques?" asked Sir Edward. "And I have often wondered how you came by your wonderful name! Were you christened by it?"

"No," she answered, the color mounting into

her cheeks. "My real name is Margaret—Margaret Griselda; but my father had a great passion for Shakespeare then, so I was named after that flower-loving heroine."

"And the melancholy Jaques?"

"The same, his real name is James."

"He is a very queer kind of fellow to be so much at home with all of you," said Sir Edward, curiously.

Dita laughed. "He was my earliest and dearest playfellow," she said. "And though you may think him ugly, I think his rough face quite beautiful. You should see him when he is playing the violin, or poring over some new and very old book—it is a great triumph of expression and feature."

"Must I go away when your melancholy Jaques comes?"

"Oh no, why should you? If he had his violin I would make him play it, but I am afraid there is no chance of that."

"Who knows? If he is such an enthusiast perhaps he will have it fastened on his back as a troubadour has his guitar, or borne behind him by a beautiful page. Talk of the——"

"Hush," said Dita, for the servant announced "Mr. Danby," and Jaques walked in.

It was still a matter of difficulty for Jaques to get across the room, especially when he saw that Perdita was not alone; and she was relieved when she saw him safely seated, facing her, between the two sofas.

"You have not brought your violin, I suppose, Jaques?" said Dita, eagerly.



"No—yes; I could fetch it if you wish it, Miss Lovel."

"Go back five miles! certainly not. I would not dream of it."

"In the afternoon," he muttered.

"Not this afternoon, but one day if you would. I want Sir Edward Norton to hear you play so much."

Jaques raised his eyes, and viewed the other invalid with a rather strange look.

"He is taking my measure," thought Sir Edward, "and uncommonly close too." And he said aloud, "Miss Lovel has told me so much of the extreme beauty of your playing, that I am most anxious to hear you."

Jaques bowed, and the color flushed into his face, as it always did when Perdita praised him.

"Are you coming home soon, Miss Dita?" he said presently, "you are so much wanted at home."

"Is my mother not so well?" cried Dita, anxiously.

"Oh no, your mother is just the same—neither better nor worse," he said, with a sigh; "but Mr. Lovel is quite lost without you, and he won't give Adams any orders while you are away."

"Miss Lovel cannot possibly move before the doctors give their permission," said Sir Edward, hastily.

"Oh no, no, of course not. How are you getting on, Miss Dita? I had hoped that you were nearly well."

"So I am, and I hope to come home in two

or three days at the latest, Jaques," she said. "I know that poor mammie must want me, and I do so long to see her again. Are you going to stay at home just now?"

"No, I am off to-morrow again to Paris; there is a great sale to take place there, and I have heard of one or two valuable books that I should like to see."

"It is dreadful to a scholar to lose a book on which he has set his heart," said Sir Edward, addressing himself to Perdita. "My friend Blackmore was telling me the other day of his having once just missed the chance of De Bry's English Virginians—which is extraordinarily rare—by the merest fluke."

"What did you say the name was, sir?" said Jaques, bending forward.

"Blackmore—Mr. John Blackmore." He stopped surprised, for Jaques uttered a loud explosive chuckle, and then immediately resumed his former gravity.

"How was it?" asked Perdita, a little ashamed of the behavior of her friend.

"He was bargaining for the book at one of those booksellers' shops, and the first day he had to do with the master, who seemed a pliable sort of man enough, so he offered him a low price, but he would not swallow that; so he went away, and returning the next day, he found only the shopman, an awkward kind of lad, but who knew twice as much about the value of the books as did his master. And this creature—this Caliban, as he called him—kept him dangling day after day, and on the very day on which he

had made up his mind to pay the whole price demanded, he coolly informed him that the shop was closed, and that they were going to retire from business."

Another loud chuckle from Jaques, but he said nothing.

"It seems to please you that poor Mr. Blackmore should have been disappointed, Mr. Danby," said Sir Edward, coldly.

"Oh, not at all; no, no, sir," faltered Jaques.

"When Blackmore told me about it," went on Sir Edward, turning to Dita, and smiling, "the tears were in his eyes. He said that he had never got over the bitterness of that disappointment, though it happened many years ago; and he finished the story with a not very polite interjection in respect to his enemy."

"Poor man," said Dita, laughing merrily. Encouraged by her example, Jaques gave way to an irrepressible fit of laughter. He struggled, he choked, he tried to stifle it in a huge pocket-handkerchief; it became nervous, and he was obliged to get up, and, hastily saying good-bye, leave the room.

"What an extraordinary creature!" said Sir Edward: "what could he find in my story to put him into such an agonizing condition?"

"I fancy that he must have known something about it all before," said Perdita; "but Jaques is always upset by a joke, and is one of those unlucky people who cannot control laughter if it gets beyond a certain point."

"I confess that I did not perceive the joke. I never saw such a person."

"Ah, you do not know how good he is!" cried Dita. "He is a rough diamond indeed."

"Unfortunately," said Sir Edward, coldly, "one of the innate faults of my character is an excess of dislike to what is unrefined. I am too fastidious, for merit gives me no pleasure without polish."

"You speak of this as a fault in a tone that betrays that you are proud of it," said Perdita, indignantly.

"I beg your pardon," said he.

"You have nothing for which to beg my pardon. Ah——" She fancied suddenly that he was asking her pardon, because he meant to include her own relations in the sweeping speech he had made. The color rushed into her face, her nostrils dilated, her eyes flashed, — she looked quite beautiful.

"I understand what you mean," she said, slowly. "I am obliged to you for undeceiving me in the belief that there might have been friendship between us—it is at an end; but though it may be wrong to say so, Sir Edward, I have the courage to say that, in some cases at least, the *parvenu* may be the truer gentleman."

After this she ought to have left the room, there was no doubt about it; but as the fates would have it, her leg was broken, and his shoulder out of joint and badly set; neither could move, and at least an hour must elapse before any interruption could come. Each took up a book, but each saw that the other was not reading, and both were very angry indeed. She

had called him, or at least had as good as told him, that he was not so true a gentleman as old Andrew Lovel; and he had spoken words that, as she understood them, she could not easily forgive. The clock struck twelve—then its single stroke announced half-past.

"They are a long time coming in," said Sir Edward, stiffly.

No answer. Sir Edward went back to his book.

Presently Mrs. Lee Aston came in.

"It is very fortunate that you two can entertain each other," she said, good-humoredly; "for I am obliged to go down to the lodge to see a child there who has burnt her foot, and the others will not be home till luncheon. But I have devised a new plan of amusement for you; I am going to push your sofa nearer to the window, Dita, so that you and Sir Edward can play chess."

"I am so much interested in my book," said Perdita.

"But I have finished mine," cried Sir Edward.

"Very well, I will just put you where you can play if you like. There—is that comfortable?"

"The light hurts my eyes," said Dita, ungraciously.

"There—is that better?" and their good-natured hostess pulled down one of the blinds.

"Thank you," they both said, and Mrs. Lee Aston bustled away.

They were close together, and neither could move, and yet they had had a deadly quarrel, and it was an hour and a half to luncheon.

They raised their eyes at the same moment; there was something irresistibly funny in the situation, and in spite of their anger they both laughed. Sir Edward was the first to speak.

"It was really and truly a thoughtless speech, Miss Lovel," he said. "I declare that I meant nothing that could offend you. Good heavens! what would you have me mean?"

"Well, perhaps you did not," she said, slowly.

"After my apology I expect one confession from you."

"None," said Perdita, decidedly.

"Yes, I have earned it; and it is this—he *is* a Caliban, is he not?"

"No."

"Yes, he is a Caliban."

"Very well, so be it," she said, impatiently.

"And you are Miranda, and I am Ferdinand, and so we will play chess," he said, beginning to arrange the board.

"Then," said Perdita, hesitatingly, "you do not mind about what I said."

"No," said he, superbly; "you were in a passion."

"I wish I could have walked out of the room," said Dita, vindictively.

"Yes, but heaven interfered."

The game lasted until the whole party came in to luncheon. The extreme pleasure he took in this daily intercourse with Perdita at last opened Sir Edward Norton's eyes—he was deeply, devotedly in love with her. This only was wanting to show him that the obstacles he himself had raised were very slight in reality. A man

must be ungenerous who will not owe fortune to the woman he loves—and generosity was as strong an element as pride in his composition. It was enough that he loved her; the world might say what it would. Some painful ordeals would have to be faced: he would have to see Andrew in authority in his own hereditary home, he would have to owe fortune and Perdita and Salford all to this man; but all would be nothing if she would consent to be his wife. He now gave himself up to the enjoyment of the present: never had he made himself so charming, never had he been so gay, so almost boyishly light-hearted; and as Perdita shyly received his attentions, his hope became stronger and stronger that she was not indifferent to him.

"Nannie," said Andrew to his wife one day, "some day we shall lose our little Dita."

"What makes you say so?" she asked, startled.

"I have just returned from Lee Aston, and Perdita comes home to-morrow, and Sir Edward goes back to the Grange, and he is to go up to London at once to have his arm reset."

"Well?" said Nannie.

"When he comes back we shall see him again.

'The sweet youth's in love!'

## CHAPTER XIX.

**I**T was December, and all the heather-bloom was dead on the hills round Dunmonaigh, and its brown hue gave a deep russet color to the landscape; here and there a larch's yellowed foliage gleamed like gold, but all the leaves were gone from the hard-wood trees.

The snow had not yet fallen, nor had there been frost enough to bind the lake with ice.

The ceremony of receiving the chief and his bride had always been gone through with the same formalities.

The carriages drove to the further end of the lake, and bride and bridegroom were rowed across to the castle by twelve of the best men of the clan.

The marriage had taken place in England, and it was the 20th of December before Lady Grisel stood waiting for the home-coming.

Master Malcolm, whose hair was as white as snow, seemed as anxious as the mother herself. What would she be like, this young English bride, who was coming among them? Lady Grisel knew little of her—had only seen that she was very young, and fair, and childish. She sat upright by the fire, her hands clasped together. Time had wrought little change in her



—had brought a little more silver into her hair, more softness into the fine dark eyes ; little but that, for her life had been still and monotonous. And it is the storm-tossed rock that is broken, not that which is washed by the slow dash of even waves.

Still and monotonous ! Years ago what a fate would that have seemed to Griselda Fitz-James ! She never knew when her ambition died, nor traced the cause of its decease ; but after Ewan's death, her old longing that Angus should make to himself a name and position became chastened and subdued, and in his successes and failures her rejoicing and disappointment were only sympathetic—she hardly knew herself.

Angus also was changed, and the wealth he had longed for so eagerly seemed to weigh on his spirits like lead. The mother and son did nothing to rouse each other, and the years slipped by.

"What o'clock is it now, Minister?" said Lady Grisel, breaking silence.

"Just three—they should be here sooner : not yet, Lady Grisel," he added ; "we shall hear the shouts and the bagpipes as they approach, and it will be time enough then to go to the door."

"Poor bride ! it is cold," said Lady Grisel, shivering.

"Cold without, but right warm within," said the worthy Minister.

"It will seem very strange to her ; Angus and I have grown rusty together," said the mother, anxiously. "And when I think of a blithe young girl coming to share our quiet life, I fear

for her happiness. I hope he will be kind to her," she said, nervously.

"She will bring sunshine to the old place," said Master Malcolm, with a sigh and a smile. "It will be good for all to have the youth and sweetness of a bonnie lassie among us—Angus is far too grave."

"He is more than grave," she said; "he is gloomy, and easily irritated; and but seldom smiles or laughs—poor little bride! but it will be different now, will it not?"

"Yes," answered he, smiling. "All cannot have the same spirits as poor Ewan; even now I can fancy I hear his clear ringing laugh and halloo to the dogs on the brae."

"Natures are different," she said, very low. "But there was a time when Angus also was gay. I have been but a bad companion; my company has sent mirth flying with outspread wings."

"Yet Angus's gravity has won him the maiden of his heart," said the Minister; "and we hear that she is good, and loving, and pretty."

"God grant her happiness," said Lady Grisel. —"Hark! is that not music?"

"I think not; we will see." He opened the door, and Lady Grisel went out on the steps, and shading her eyes with her hand, looked over the loch.

Nothing was to be seen yet; but far away sounded faintly the shrill wild music of the bagpipes. She remained standing on the steps, and the water washed almost up to her feet: it looked very deep and gray, and the castle threw

a dark, undefined shadow over it—only the scarlet flag reflecting a blood-red stain.

"The day of our home-coming," said Lady Grisel, dreamily, "was all joy and sunshine; the loch sparkled like diamonds, and the hills glowed with crimson heather and golden gorse. It was many years ago, Minister, and the days seem to me types of the life at Dunmonaigh then and now, and when I look into my own heart, I read that the fault is mine."

"Do not be afraid, Lady Grisel," said Master Malcolm again. "The bride will bring with her her own store of happiness, and you must arouse yourselves, and be gay for her sake; and by-and-by when she has taken root here, you will hear her singing about the house as all happy lassies do. Come in, it is very cold."

"No, no—listen!"

Now on the ear swelled the music louder and louder, and the sound of ever-increasing cheering, till round a bend of the loch the little fleet of boats swept swiftly. Lady Grisel strained her eyes, till in the foremost boat she could see Angus with his young bride. Flags and streamers flying from the boats, made the scene brilliant with color, and the pipers played with enthusiasm the welcome of Clan Monach to their chief and his bride. Onward, with long sweeping strokes, came the foremost boat, and swept up to the steps. The two first of the men leaped out, and crossing their dirks behind the bride conducted her to Lady Grisel, who received her into her arms.

"Welcome! welcome!" was all she could

say, as she drew them in to the warm fire-side.

Her heart was so full, she could only look at them, and hardly speak.

Angus's cheek was flushed, and his restless eyes more restless than usual; he grasped Master Malcolm's hand with a pressure that was more convulsive than affectionate, and he walked up and down the room.

Mabel sat by the fire with her warm white furs all round her. She looked a fair sweet specimen of a young English girl; the color came and went in her cheek, and her soft eyes followed every movement of her husband's.

Lady Grisel's strong emotion puzzled and confused her, and after the first warm kiss she knew not how to act.

At last the servants announced that the crowd had abandoned their boats, and gathered again; and Lady Grisel led the way to the great door. She passed out first, and then presented the bride to the people with a solemn movement, as if she went through some strange old ceremony. Then the Minister presented to her the keys of the castle, and in the sight of the crowd, she handed them to the new-wedded *châtelaine*.

The cheering and music began again, louder and louder, only checked for Angus to utter a few words of thanks.

Then the servants came out, and some went in, and there was feasting and drinking and dancing in the great stone kitchen, and cheering and shouts of welcome, far into the night.

## CHAPTER XX.

"**P**ERDITA! come here, Perdita!" Andrew came into the great hall in search of the child.

"I am here," she said, putting her fair head up from the low seat in the cloister window. "Why so formal, daddy? Mine is a strange case! I have two long dignified names of my own, another softer name by which I am named, and even that is shorn of its first syllable, unless you wish to make use of me, and send mammie a message per—Dita."

"Saucy child, I must run your errands now that you are lame."

"Ah! I can walk alone now—see!" and disdaining her crutches, Perdita put out her arms for balance, and came slowly forward.

"There, that is enough!" cried Andrew, eagerly pushing a chair to her. "Don't be imprudent; sit down and arrange this bouquet," and he threw a great bunch of flowers on the table.

Perdita began to separate them, and Andrew sat down by her. "Your mother looks much better, Dita, does she not?"

"A thousand million times better," she answered, gayly. "I am sure Dr. Grant under-

stands her, and every time you quote Shakespeare, daddy, it is like a tonic to her."

"Perdita arranging flowers and not talking Shakespeare is an anomaly; begin at once, young lady," said Andrew. Dita began—

"Here's flowers for you,—  
Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram;  
The marigold that goes to bed wi' the sun,  
And with him rises weeping; these are flowers  
Of middle summer, and I think they are given  
To men of middle age. You're very welcome."

"Bravo!" cried Perdita. "Is not that an apt quotation? I have not recited my Perdita speeches since I was a very little child, and had a beautiful long mane. What an orchid, daddy! Do tell Adams to grow a great many more of this kind."

"Orchids! orchids! where do you find orchids in Shakspeare? All old-fashioned flowers for me."

"You must introduce orchids in your own plays, then. Of course he would have introduced them if he had seen such beauties as these; they are more like the flowers of Paradise than of earth," she said, enthusiastically.

"Yes, especially that monkey-faced specimen," said Mr. Lovel, with supreme contempt.

Dita laughed. "They have a new one at the Lee Astons'," she said, "which I had never seen before. Mrs. Lee Aston promised to tell me the name, but I forgot it."

"Were you very happy there?" asked Andrew, rather wistfully.

"Oh, so very, very happy!" answered Dita. "They were all more kind to me than I could express. Hark! do you hear Jaques's violin?"

There came to their ears a lovely, far-distant sound, rising and falling, passing through strange cadences, now sweet, now straining, then swelling into those yearning sounds which make the listener feel as if the musician played on his very heart-strings.

Neither spoke while it lasted, but when the music broke off abruptly in an unfinished passage, they looked at each other in astonishment.

"I never heard Jaques do that before, what can have happened?" said Perdita. "Dear daddy, an you love me, look out of the drawing-room window—the sound of the music comes from the shrubbery—and tell me whether Jaques lives, or has fallen dead!"

The sound of the violin was again heard as of a hand dashed across it—a curious twanging discord, all out of tune like a breaking heart. Perdita gave a little shiver and turned to her flowers; some of the ferns had been too long out of water and were dead, and she threw them aside.

Andrew returned from the window, saying, gayly,

"Jaques's abrupt ending was owing to the arrival of a visitor. You will find it hard to believe, Dita. It was Sir Edward Norton, who has at last made up his mind to come under the roof of Salford Abbey."

The color flushed into Dita's face, and she

turned away her head ; but Andrew saw it, and the shy sweet smile on her lips, and he smiled and sighed.

Five, ten minutes passed and he did not come in, then Andrew went once more to the drawing-room window.

"Sir Edward has stopped to have a little conversation with Jaques," he said. "They are under the oak-tree ; he has fastened the reins of his horse to a branch ; they are going into the shrubbery."

"I think mammie must be down by this time," was Perdita's answer ; and, taking the prettiest flowers, she went to Mrs. Lovel's room.

"'Ban, 'Ban—Ca-Caliban,  
Has a new master—Get a new man.  
Freedom ! heyday !"

Quotations are infectious, and Sir Edward muttered these words to himself as he rode up the road and espied Jaques's uncouth figure playing on the lawn.

The music broke short with that strange twang, and he also shuddered, and wondered at the jar of the nerves it produced. And lo ! Caliban strode across his path, and, hand on rein, entreated for five minutes' conversation.

Sir Edward, much surprised, dismounted very unwillingly. His horse was a quiet old animal, fitted to carry a man with one arm in a sling, and he tied him to a tree and signified to Jaques that he was ready to listen to him. It seemed doubly hard just now—he was going to meet his fate ; to lay all—his love, his pride, his pov-



erty—at the feet of his fair lady; and the hope that he had won her love made all sacrifice seem as nothing to him.

What could Jaques have to say to him? His rugged face was as pale as ashes, and his eyes were troubled.

“We cannot talk here, sir,” he said, rather hoarsely. “Would you mind coming a few steps with me into the shrubbery?”

“I do not mind standing, Mr. Danby, and we can speak just as well here. I am rather in haste.”

“I will not keep you—that is——”

“You will forgive me, if I ask you not to detain me long. If you could call on me at the Grange, for instance, I should be able to attend to you better.”

“No, now—I must speak to you now, sir.”

“Very well,” said Sir Edward, impatiently; “I am all attention.”

“For what object have you overcome your horror of entering your old home?”

“You presume, Mr. Danby: that is a question you have no right to ask.”

“I have a right!” cried Jaques; “and if you will have patience with me, I will show you that I have a right.”

Sir Edward leaned against the great oak-tree, and looked at Jaques in increased astonishment.

“I decline to answer your question, Mr. Danby,” he said.

Jaques raised his eyes and again looked at him with that earnest look that had made Ed-

ward Norton feel that he was endeavoring to read him through and through; then he said abruptly—

“I cannot talk here, Sir Edward; we are in full view of the windows: for Heaven’s sake do what I beg of you—follow me!”

Edward Norton’s curiosity was aroused, and, tightening the bridle on the branch of the tree, he followed Jaques, who strode on before him into the wood.

Danby thrust aside the boughs, and as he did so the remaining dead leaves rustled to the ground, and he pushed his way into a small open space where two paths crossed, and there was a seat; it was well shut in from sight. He threw himself on the seat, and stooping forward covered his eyes with one hand, the elbow resting on his knee, and began to speak at once.

“Sir Edward,” he said, “I take you for a man of honor.”

He did not see the half-mocking bow of assent.

“I wish to save you from either committing an action that you will always regret, or one that you cannot do without forfeiting that honor.”

“You speak in riddles, Mr. Danby.”

“Sir Edward, I am not clever or even clear-sighted, but I have discerned your love for our Perdita.”

“I desire you to be silent, sir,” said Edward Norton, angrily. “These matters concern no one but myself, and I will not permit Miss

Lovel's name to be used. You assume too much."

"Has no one feelings but yourself?" cried Jaques, starting up. "She is my adoration; she has been my idol since I first taught her little feet to walk, her sweet voice to lisp my name; for years, years have I loved her—you have only known her a few short weeks."

"This is intolerable," muttered Sir Edward.

"I did not call you to tell you that!" went on Jaques, excitedly. "I called you to prove your love; to find out whether it has power to break through the traditions of your haughty race. Have you considered well?" he said, in a strange hard voice. "Perdita is not your equal."

"Mr. Danby."

"Hush! I will not detain you; but have patience with me, I beseech you."

Something pathetic in the voice of the strange being before him made Sir Edward put aside his indignation and resolve to listen.

"You have considered how far beneath you she is in position?"

"I have."

"That the Lovels are of very humble origin: he a bookseller in London, she a petty farmer's daughter, trained to milk the cows."

"I know."

"You know them to be honest, good, and true, although such homely folks."

"Yes—all else is nothing."

"You know that the world will say that, for the sake of Salford, you have bowed your pride to wed the daughter of a tradesman."

"I do not care."

"Your love, then, is strong enough to overcome more obstacles than these?"

"There are no more——"

"Man! man!" cried Jaques, eagerly, "you are not equal——"

"In everything!" cried Sir Edward; "for she brings such a dower of goodness and innate nobility, that my poor advantages of birth scarcely level the scale."

"You love her so well that if—if——"

"What do you mean?" cried Sir Edward.

"This,—you think to wed the child of honest folks—a bride whose birth, though of humble origin, is as honest as your own. This is not so."

"What do you mean? Speak, or I will wring it from you," and he seized his arm.

"Perdita is no child of theirs; they took her orphaned from the workhouse, and she has no name."

Sir Edward staggered back against the tree as white as death. Jaques laughed bitterly.

"This straw has broken the camel's back," he said. "Yes, it is quite true, she is no fit bride for you,—too low of birth, and a thousand times too high for the scorn of your noble family! I have warned you; for if you had pledged your troth, and, hearing the truth, had broken it, by the Heaven above us, I could have murdered you! I have saved your pride or your honor, Sir Edward Norton."

"I have been grossly deceived."

"I have undeceived you now. I was right, was I not? The obstacle is too strong."

"Leave me to think;—you will drive me mad! The workhouse! a nameless orphan! Danby, are you telling me the truth?"

"As I hope for salvation. You can look in the case-books of the workhouse in King John Street, Soho, and you will find No. 14. The father at least was a gentleman, the mother an Italian, and——"

"Stop, stop! you torture me. Danby, you are right; the obstacle is too strong, O Dita, even for you!" A look of agony passed over his face, and he almost broke down; then added suddenly—"All this, of course, is quite private between ourselves, and she need never know."

Jaques was standing watching him fixedly: "I judged rightly," he said between his teeth; "and it would have broken her heart."

Sir Edward was turning away, when he suddenly came back.

"You meant well," he said, hoarsely, "and I am not ungrateful."

"I do not care for your gratitude," said Jaques, roughly, "I have saved Perdita from what she might have had to bear if the truth had come too late, and proved too hard."

"And you love her also?"

"I love her as mortals love the angels,—she is the idol of my life!"

"And I?"

"Take refuge with your dignity;" and Jaques broke through the trees and was gone.

Mr. Lovel came into his wife's sitting-room. Perdita sat on a stool by her sofa, her head in her mother's lap, while Nannie played with her

yellow hair ; her rosy lips smiled with the shy joyousness of a child.

"After all, Dita, our visitor has not come in," said he, in a disturbed voice. "When he came out of the shrubbery he mounted his horse and galloped off like a very madman, nor looked once behind him."

A little shadow passed over the young girl's brow, a light seemed to have gone from her life, a vague sense of a cloud passing between her and the sun. Who does not know that chill feeling?

"I fancy Jaques must have said something to him which offended him. I wonder what it could have been !" continued Andrew, uneasily ; "and Jaques is playing again so strangely."

"I will go to him," said Dita, calmly rising ; and Andrew, anxious to talk to Nannie, did not seek to stop her.

The violin was sounding strangely wild, passing from one mad strain to another, fast and loud, with a kind of wail in its merriment that made it weird and unnatural.

Perdita went out ; the colors of earth, trees, and sky seemed dimmed because of the shadow that had come between her and the sun. She came up to the musician as he stood playing under the oak and put out her hand, the notes died faintly away.

"Jaques," she said, drearily—"Jaques, he is gone."

"Yes, yes, Miss Dita, and it is better so."

She raised her eyes to his, and did not know how faithfully he read the simple story in their

dark depths. One long, deep sigh he gave, then he turned his head aside, and said without looking at her—

“I told him your real origin—his love was not enough to conquer.”

“I know,” she said, softly. He began to play again a little soft cadence, and while the sweetest sounds swelled forth, she went gently away. His hand passed roughly over the instrument, and a string cracked loudly: Jaques put down his violin and sat down on the ground,—there was a look in his face of intense suffering, but he set to work patiently to mend the broken string, and his broken heart.

## CHAPTER XXI.

THE December that had begun so well grew colder and colder, and snow six inches deep lay on the ground on Christmas-day. The birds had nothing to eat; Perdita fed them from her windows, and delighted in their increasing tameness. Mrs. Lovel never left the house, and in her warm rooms she managed to remain pretty well. Perdita was no longer lame, but she could not be out quite as much as she used to be, and the life at Salford was very still and quiet.

There was an unspoken shadow over them all. Perdita had thought her secret all her own, and did not know that the three who loved her best had seen all, and to each other had spoken openly. Jaques told Mrs. Lovel what he had done; he told her that he knew the strong pride of Edward Norton's family,—it was a proverb in the place; he told her that long ago he had foreseen what would come, and dreaded the effect of the disclosure of Perdita's true birth.

"It was to save her I did it," faltered Jaques. "He would have broken it off, or if not he, his family would have done it for him, and she would have suffered." He said that an instinct warned him when he saw him riding along, that



the time to speak had come. And Nannie could not but acknowledge that he had done well and wisely.

Perdita was not sad, only she was no longer gay, and now and then looked very wistful; her love for Edward Norton was not admitted or acknowledged even to herself; so when he went away, and never came again, she was conscious of a dull aching in her heart which she scarcely understood.

On Christmas-day she and her father walked down to the church together. It was a hard frost, and the crisp snow crackled under foot, and the trees, powdered with sparkling hoarfrost, looked like frosted silver; above, the sullen gray sky was heavy with snow yet to come.

When a young heart is gay and joyous, cold brightens and invigorates; when it is sad, even a little sad, cold gnaws and chills. Perdita hurried through the snow and drew her fur cloak tighter round her.

It was a little, simple old church, with a square low tower of great antiquity. The congregation were mostly laborers and their families. The clergyman was very old, and during his life no restoration could be made. Dita had placed holly wreaths in the windows, and all the best flowers she could find in the greenhouses decked the church; and all eyes were fixed admiringly on her work.

They came in and went straight to the squire's pew, which faced the pulpit; it was an old-fashioned place, and Perdita knelt down

covering her face with her slender fingers. Quite in the background came in among the laborers an unwonted figure. Sir Edward Norton, looking very ill and worn, sat down at the far end of the church, where he could see the fair outlines of Perdita's face and her waving golden hair above the old oak pew. He did not move when during the service the congregation rose up and knelt down, but sat still, leaning forward with his eyes fixed on her as though he would print her image on his brain.

Then came a hymn—the glorious Christmas hymn, which is grand even when sung by school-children in a village church—and in the middle of the sacred strain he stole away out. Perdita looked half round, but she never ceased singing. A ray of light pierced through the somber sky and lighted up her hair till it seemed to shine like a halo.

A dog-cart was waiting outside, a portman-teau within it, and Edward Norton was driven swiftly away to the station.

"Dita," said her father gently, as they walked home. "Do you know who was in church?"

"Sir Edward Norton," she said quietly.

"You knew?"

"I thought so."

"It was his good-by. Lady Norton came yesterday. She has persuaded him to go abroad—he has been ill. He goes to-day."

"Let us walk faster, daddy—it is very cold." And they walked quickly on.

Nannie was able to come into the dining-

room that day, and afterward the usual distribution of dinners and gifts took place. By four o'clock all was over, and Dita nestled into her favorite little corner by Mrs. Lovel's sofa with a book, and Jaques and Andrew went out for a walk. Suddenly the door-bell rang with a loud, vigorous pull, and within five minutes a whole tribe of Lee Astons and Grethards poured into the room—all the schoolroom party—headed by Meta. They had come, they said, to carry off Perdita, by force if necessary; they were to have charades and *tableaux vivants*, and every kind of amusement for a house full of children; and Jack had come home and persuaded his mother to send them off to bring the solitary little home-bird into their merry circle.

Perdita's cheek flushed, and there came to her a longing wish to be one of the children again, merry and happy, and free from care; there came into her mind the refrain of that pathetic song,—

“Make me a child again, just for to-night.”

She was tired of the blank—tired of the long day; her youth resented care, she was so young.

Mrs. Lovel's watchful eye saw and read Dita's face, and she accepted for her eagerly, and would not listen to her assertions that she could not leave them alone on Christmas-day.

She was not to return that night; and in less than a quarter of an hour, Perdita, and a

box containing all that she would want, were packed closely into the little omnibus full of children. It was a gay scene into which Dita came, blinking her large eyes from the darkness; and she was quickly divested of her warm wraps, coaxed and petted, and made much of, and immensely amused by all the merry games going on among children and elders together.

She had wondered in the carriage how she should meet Jack; but he came swiftly up, with a warm shake of the hand, and was here, there, and everywhere, with rather boisterous fun. All seemed like a dream, the noise and the warmth and the shouts, as they played earth, air, and water; and for half a moment she shut her eyes, to try and realize it all; but she was summarily roused by a sharp blow from the ball, and a shout of earth, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

"Trout, salmon, eagle!" she cried, in an agony of hurry, and then followed a burst of laughter; she was fairly roused, and found herself playing with as much vigor as little Dick, the youngest Grethard, still in knickerbockers. Then came a pause, and in marched the butler, carrying a magnificent dish of snap-dragon, and the lamps were carried out, and the fun rose to the highest pitch. One of Lady Armine's children, little Alice, was rather frightened, and Dita held her hand to coax her. Then the salt was thrown on, and the usual effect produced,—Jack and the boys adding to the terrors by the most horrible grimaces.

At eight o'clock the little children dispersed to bed, and the elder ones went to dress for

dinner, while all the performers in the evening's amusement joined in a schoolroom tea.

Perdita begged to be allowed to join them—she was the merriest among them; once, when the recollection of her troubles flashed across her, she wondered at herself, and fancied that they were all untrue,—that her troubles could not be real—only a mistake.

When the charades were over dancing began. Dita was still afraid to venture, but Mrs. Lee Aston made her sit close beside her, and she enjoyed it almost as much.

"Not one dance?" asked Jack; "will you not dance even one? What a fatal first ball that was!"

Dita gave a little shiver; but she answered gayly, "Not one; my dancing days are over."

"I wonder what my Mabel is doing!" said Lady Amine, wistfully; and her thoughts were wandering away to the first of her nestlings who had taken wing.

Far away in Dunmonaigh, Mabel was standing at her window alone, and the large tears were rolling down her cheeks. Christmas-day, when all families meet together, and the boys are home from school, and life is at its brightest, she stood alone, looking out on the frozen lake, where the moon gleamed over the snow, and each black Scotch fir was shrouded with white. It was very cold, and her heart was full, longing for the father and mother who loved her so fondly, for the noisy brothers and the merry sisters who overflowed her home: all was so dignified, and all seemed so old, she would fain have

been silly and childishly merry again. Angus was kind, and Lady Grisel was even too anxious to do all for her she could ; but they were so wise and old, and Mabel felt as if she were fluttering in a cage ; and as she looked out, she pressed her forehead against the cold window-pane and sobbed, and kissed the great packet of letters that had arrived that morning, the loving blessings from her parents, the pages of school-room news from her sisters, and the boyish "Merry Christmases" from all the boys.

Then she started on hearing her husband's voice, and carefully wiped her eyes and put the letters away. He had thought them silly in the morning, and she would rather he did not speak of them again ; so she smoothed her soft hair, and stole down stairs, for fear that Angus should come and seek her.

The dancing at the Lee Astons' went on till past midnight ; then all was over, and Perdita went up to bed. What a strange long day it seemed ! and then she started and gave a little moan, for the pain came back to her heart with a sudden pang, and she knew that it had but slept for a time, and that it lived and was very keen. Her little simple prayer went up for distant friends, for Edward and for Mabel, and when she fell asleep her pillow was wet with tears.

## CHAPTER XXII.

WHEN the spring came Nannie was not well enough to leave Salford, so the journey to the German baths was postponed till the autumn, with which arrangement they were all well pleased.

The fine sunny summer brought back some strength to the invalid ; she was able to be constantly out of doors, and the quiet and peace made her enjoy it much.

The Armines and Lee Astons, and all the gayer neighbors, were gone to London ; but Perdita was almost glad, as it left her free to devote herself to Mrs. Lovel, whom she watched with clinging tenderness.

At last, when the middle of July was reached the doctor would hear of no further delay. A courier was engaged, and the whole party started on their journey.

Badfeld lay, as do most of such towns, in a valley, mountains rising hopelessly on every side. The railway ran through the midst of the valley, which was perhaps a mile wide, and the low ground was swampy and wet. The town was built on a lower slope of the hills : a huge square hotel, with windows enough for a manufactory, stood in a large garden, and there were

innumerable steep little walks through the low fir-woods on the mountain-side.

The little party arrived very tired after a hot dusty journey one Thursday evening, and found the courier (who had preceded them by an earlier train) in despair. There were no rooms to be had, except one small bedroom on the fifth floor.

They looked at each other in dismay. The hotel-keeper could give them no hope, though their rooms had been ordered weeks before: more and more people were arriving daily, and he was at his wits' end where to put them.

"A large family came yesterday," he said, "and I know not how long she stays. If she go, these ladies shall immediately occupy their apartments; if not——" and he shrugged his shoulders.

A carrying-chair was brought, and Mrs. Lovel was carried up stairs to the one room, while Mr. Lovel and the courier sallied forth on an expedition to all the other hotels and lodging-houses in the town, to see if any rooms could be had.

They returned in triumph; they found that though the Schweitzerhof (of which every village in German Switzerland possesses one) was quite full, it had belonging to it a tidy little *châlet*, a *dépendance* containing five rooms. It was now occupied by a German princess with her two daughters, but they were going to leave on the following morning, and Andrew had joyfully secured it all.

For this one night Perdita must sleep with her mother and the maid, and two beds were rolled in from the passage; and Andrew could



find a room for himself in the Badhof, a little inn some way off in the town.

It was a great relief to think that the present state of things was not to continue, and they were in better spirits than they had ventured to think possible an hour before.

Nannie had her dinner brought up to her room, and Perdita and her father went down to the *table d'hôte* room.

It was all new to both of them, and they were much amused by the crowd of people seated in groups round little tables eating and talking ceaselessly. The courier marshaled them to a table which they were to share with two ladies and three very magnificent German officers, who rose at their approach and bowed profoundly.

Suddenly Perdita uttered an exclamation of pleasure.

"Oh, father, how delightful! a familiar face."

And there at a round table in a corner of the great room, Andrew saw Lady Armine with three of her children, and a lady whom Dita knew to be the governess. They had just finished their supper and were leaving the room.

Dita would fain have run after them, but did not dare in that crowd; but she was in high spirits at having already found companions for their time at Badfeld.

Mildred Grethard was the next sister to Mabel; she was eighteen years old, and lately come out; and now that the eldest daughter was married, she was her mother's constant companion. The next girl, Mary, was suffering

from a weakness of the spine, and it was for her sake that they were there.

She and the little boy, Dick, were the only ones still in the schoolroom, he not being yet old enough to go to school.

The next morning was spent by the Lovels in moving and settling in the *châlet*, which rejoiced in the name of Bellevue. It was a nice little house, a pretense Swiss cottage, with a large veranda, into which all the long French windows opened. It was fixed, as it were, into the side of the mountain, so that there was a sweet smell of fir-wood round about it. In front, great crimson oleanders grew in tubs, and were in full flower.

It took Mrs. Lovel's fancy at once; she had never expected to be so much pleased with anything out of England. Whether it was the smallness of it that gave her the impression that she had realized the real dream of her life—a beautiful little rural cottage—or whether it was only the rest and repose after the crowded and noisy hotels they had been in, but she seemed to be thoroughly settled and happy there at once, to Andrew's great joy.

They had brought all sorts of pillows and air-cushions with them, and Nannie was carried out to a sofa under the veranda, where she could lie among the oleanders, and see through the trees all the gayly-dressed people walking in the garden or listening to the never-ceasing band.

There was a spare room kept in the *châlet* for Jaques, in case he should join them later.

In the afternoon Mr. Lovel and Dita found out the rooms which Lady Armine inhabited, and went to call on her. A waiter carried their cards in to No. 95, but before the answer came, Mildred came running out to beg them to come in. The girls were quite enchanted to see Perdita.

Whether Lady Armine was as enchanted to see Andrew was not quite so certain, but she had a great respect for him, and a most cordial liking for his wife, and she greeted both father and daughter with warm kindness.

Perdita was pressed to spend as much time as she could spare with the girls, and it was insisted on that she should share their German master, and come and play whenever she liked upon the piano, which they had secured by a rare piece of good fortune.

Then Lady Armine put on her bonnet and went across the garden with Andrew to see Mrs. Lovel, and the three girls sat down to have a good chat together.

"And how are you, Mary?" said Perdita; "how many baths have you had?"

"Only three, and they are very pleasant. They are beautiful white baths, and the water is blue, and as clear as crystal."

"And the woman next door," shouted Dick, who could never control his voice, "sings all the time at the top of her voice—a sort of howl without any air in it; and Mary says it is exactly like the Banshee."

"Not so loud, Dick, please; but it is quite true, it is a most horrible sound, for it never

goes with the band; and with the constant rush of water into the baths, it has a most eerie effect."

"Jones told Miss Benton," pursued Dick, "that the woman's maid's name is Streichhoch, pronounced like a hiccough."

"My dear Dick!"

"And Streichhoch told Jones that her lady (that's the Banshee) is always afraid of having a fit in her bath, and if she stops singing for one moment she is to run in with a jug of cold water."

"I should have thought that there was water enough already," said Dita, laughing. "What is this singing lady like on *terra firma*?"

"She is beautiful," said Dick, gravely.

"She has golden hair, and the pinkest cheeks, and the blackest eyebrows conceivable," said Mildred, "and she is Dick's ideal of female beauty."

"Are there any more funny people here?" asked Pedita.

"There is an Italian lady who sits with her legs crossed, smoking cigarettes, whom we often watch. And, by the by, a friend of yours has been here; she passed through Badfeld last week, on her way to the Italian lakes."

"Who is that?"

"Lady Norton; she has a Miss Gray with her, a niece whom she is very fond of, and they are going to meet Sir Edward at Como. They mean to linger there until it is cool enough for traveling home. He has been climbing all the worst mountains in Switzerland."

"He is fond of Alpine climbing," said Dita, her heart beating quickly.

"Yes; and Lady Norton says that even the guides are astonished at his powers."

"Have you seen the eagle?" interrupted Dick.

"No; what eagle?"

"It comes from the mountains," answered Mildred, "and has been seen several times in the valley."

"Such a fine fellow!" cried Dick; "immense! and Sir Edward told Lady Norton that he saw him——"

"No, Dick, not that eagle—an eagle."

"Swoop down and carry off a very fat little marmot in its mouth—its claws, I mean. I believe they feel about and pick out the fattest."

"Then they certainly will not catch you," said Perdita, making a dash at the little blue knickerbockers, which skillfully wriggled out of reach.

"Jack comes to-morrow," shouted Dick, *apropos de bottes*.

"Mr. Lee Aston, you most impertinent little monkey!" cried Mildred.

"Jack—I always call him Jack," said Dick. "It will be great fun when he comes."

"What can he be coming here for?" said Dita, wonderingly.

"He is very rheumatic, and has a bone in his back," said Dick.

"My dear boy!"

"He told me so himself; he said it was a dreadful bone a whole yard long," and Dick's face looked quite in earnest.

"I do not know why he is coming," said Mildred, her pretty cheeks more pink than usual.

"We saw a great deal of him in London, and when we came abroad he went to Dunmonaigh to see Mabel and Angus, and he promised to come out here and tell us all about them afterward."

A pleasant idea came into Perdita's mind, and smiling herself, she caught a corresponding smile on Mary's face.

"I am very glad he is coming," she said, gayly.

"He said the waters would melt the bone if they were hot enough," said Dick. "I asked him if it would hurt, and he said awfully."

"Poor fellow!" said Dita, laughing.

"You have heard of his new fortune, have you not?" said Mary.

"No, but I shall be delighted at any good fortune coming to any of those dear people."

"His old aunt, Miss Ashburn, has made him her heir, and now gives him a very good allowance; is it not nice?"

"I am so glad! I always thought that she was a kind old lady, and very fond of Jack Lee Aston."

"They are all delighted," said Mildred. "For though he is quite clever enough to make his own way, of course it would have been slow work."

"Jack will be able to tell us about Mabel's big dog," said Dick, finding his friend's prospects a very dull topic of conversation.

"Has Mabel a big dog?" said Perdita.

"Yes, almost as big as a little pony. Lady

Grisel got it for her because she wanted one ; she gets her everything she wants."

"That is very nice for her."

"She's not nice now," said Dick, discontentedly ; "she always used to be so jolly, but she's quite spoilt ; and when mamma and Milly and I went there, they kept telling me to run away just as if I was one of the babies."

"Oh, Dick, Dick, nonsense !" cried Mildred.

"It's not nonsense," cried he, indignantly ; "and she never laughs and plays now as we used——"

"Tell me, is not Dunmonaigh quite beautiful ?" asked Perdita, anxious to stop Dick's confidences.

"Yes, lovely ! quite beautiful !" said Mary, hastily ; "mamma and Mildred were there for nearly a fortnight before they went to London."

"And Mabel was quite well and flourishing, I hope ?"

"Yes, she was well," said Mildred ; and she walked to the piano to hide that her eyes had filled with tears. She could still feel the clasp of her sister's arms tight round her neck, and hear her passionate cry of "Oh, how can I let you go, mother ! how can I let you leave me !" —when poor Mabel's little attempts at concealment all broke down, and they saw too plainly that she was not happy.

"Quick, quick, Milly, Miss Lovel !" shouted Dick, rushing to the window.

"What is it ?" cried Perdita, running after him.

"Look ! there is the Banshee going to the fountain—do look !"

Across the gravel-walk swept a magnificently-dressed lady, in a cloud of white muslin and Malines lace, with masses of golden hair, and the black eyebrows Mildred had described.

"A most substantial Banshee," said Perdita, laughing, for the lady was not ethereal.

"I know all about her," said Dick, eagerly. "She is very grand outside, and dreadfully stingy; she only gives——"

"Dick," said Mary, shaking her head, "you know you ought not to listen to silly gossip."

"Dick, Dick, always Dick!" cried the incorrigible boy; "well, I won't say a word, but next time I see her, I'll sing—"

'Here a penny, there a penny, everywhere a penny.'

Dick had been with his sister to see "The Happy Land," and had adopted its songs; now he was dancing all about the room singing—

"With a little penny here, and a little penny there!  
Here a penny, there a penny, everywhere a penny!"

and in the midst of his song, Miss Benton came in and carried him off for a walk.

Perdita looked at her watch, and finding that time had passed quicker than she could have believed possible, hurried back to the *châlet*.

She found Lady Armine still sitting with Mrs. Lovel, and the former told her that she had been making all sorts of arrangements for her to spend a great deal of time with Mildred and Mary, and that she thought that together they ought to enjoy Badfeld very much. Lady Armine made an appointment to call on Mrs. Lovel



the next day about one o'clock, when poor Nannie was always down and at her best ; and then she went away, leaving a general impression of kindness and warmth behind her that was very pleasant.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

IN Dunmonaigh Castle was one very quaint and charming room which had been carefully prepared by Lady Grisel for Mabel's use. It was square, and had two recesses in round turrets at one end, their narrow windows looking over the loveliest views of the country round—the south windows over the loch, the western ones toward beautiful Benichon and its range of purple hills.

The walls were hung with pale-green silk, old oriental plates upon them, and great oriental china jars were in the corners, full of *pot-pourri*, which gave out an old-fashioned aromatic smell.

Lady Grisel herself was wont always to occupy a high-backed chair, but she had supplied Mabel's rooms with luxurious furniture, all covered with the same fine old silk, of which there had been rolls lying by in the huge lumber-rooms up stairs.

In this room Lady Grisel and Mabel were alone one evening—Angus had gone to Edinburgh on business, and would not return that night. Lady Grisel had ordered one of the old boxes to be brought down from the lumber-room to amuse Mabel; they were full of treasures for-

gotten and thrown aside, but well worth a rummage.

They waited till the lights should be brought ; and Mabel sat in the turret with her elbow on the window-sill and her eyes on the loch, so still and dark in the waning light.

Lady Grisel sat half leaning back in her stiff chair, with her hands lightly clasped over the bunch of keys in her lap.

"Mabel," she said, gently, "shall we ring for the candles to be lighted?"

"Not yet; it is so pleasant in this half light."

"You are too young to love the gloaming, child," said Lady Grisel, sadly. "When I was your age, I could not bear that hour—always daylight and brilliant lamplight for me."

"There is a little young moon," said Mabel; "and it looks so pretty on the deep water."

A sound in her daughter-in-law's voice made Lady Grisel rise and approach her.

"Mabel! crying again; my poor child!"

There was a look almost of despair in Lady Grisel's face, as Mabel rose, and coming to her, sat down on the ground, and burying her face in her lap, gave way to a passion of sobs and tears.

"Tell me, darling, tell me what ails you? Oh, Mabel, why cannot we make you happy?"

"It is very wrong; please forgive me."

"Forgive you, my poor child! it is I that should ask for forgiveness. Why did you ever come from your happy home to this house? Has Angus been unkind to you again?"

"It is very silly," said Mabel, trying to brush

away her tears; "but when I wanted to kiss him and say good-by, he pushed me away and said, 'There, that will do.' He does not love me; he is so hard. Oh! I ought not to say all this."

"And you," murmured Lady Grisel, fondly, "you have been so much coaxed and petted all your life, poor wee thing!"

"Do you think he would have married me if he had not loved me?" said poor Mabel. "Ah! he seems to be made of stone!"

"My poor child," said his mother, "Angus is not young like you: he has grown accustomed to a cold, calm life. I never have caressed him as you young things do—he never could bear caressing even as a child. Do not expect him to come into your ways at once: be patient, and try to win him; and oh, do not let your own warm little heart grow cold!"

"He speaks so bitterly to me," faltered Mabel.

"I know—I know it too well."

"Mamma told me to think only of his happiness, and in doing that, I should forget that I am not happy myself: and I have tried—oh, believe me, I have tried hard; but I seem to have no power to affect his happiness one way or another. I cannot make him smile by being gay, or sad by crying—it is cold, calm indifference, and it wounds me, it hurts me so."

"I believe, Mabel, that in his heart of hearts, he has warm, strong affections, but, as with all men who are reserved, they are hidden."

"Why, then, has he trained his whole life down to a calm, dead, monotonous level—day after day the same still smile, except when he is

angry? Oh, I cannot get Jock's howls out of my ears since he beat him yesterday! But, to-day, again, the same incessant activity, as though he could not sit down for one moment to think, or dream, or talk to me."

Lady Grisel passed her hand over her brow,—Mabel went on—

"I suppose I shall tone down to it; sometimes I feel already that I begin to fossilize, but not with you."

She hid her face again: Lady Grisel softly stroked her hair.

"My child," she said, "I have been thinking of a plan which I want you to consider well: perhaps it would break through Angus's reserve if you were more thrown upon him—if I were to leave you."

Mabel started up with almost a scream—"Oh no, no! do not leave me; what should I do without you? Promise, promise you will not leave me—I will not let you move till you promise!"

Lady Grisel was startled by her vehemence—so startled, that she clasped the poor child in her arms, and could only silence her entreaties by making the required promise.

"You are foolish, Mabel," she said lovingly.

"Ah! what could I do without you? You have frightened me so much!" and in truth she looked pale and temulous.

Lady Grisel made her lie down on the sofa, and rang for lights, saying, "Now darling, we must have no more sad talks; give me a kiss, and dry your eyes, and I will open this big

box—I fancy there is some old lace in this one.”

Mabel struggled hard for composure, and succeeded by the time the servants came.

There were old silver sconces on the walls, and the wax candles in them shed a pretty soft light over the room.

Lady Grisel looked at her daughter-in-law: it was strange how this gentle dependent girl had brought out all the unknown depths of tenderness in her heart. She who had been all her life reserved and dignified, now coaxed and petted Mabel, with an instinctive feeling that, if the warmth of demonstrative love was altogether withdrawn from her, she would pine away like a flower for want of sun.

Lady Grisel opened the box. There was a bundle first of old brocade, a canary-colored suit with a waistcoat embroidered in silver; then a gown, the waist some four inches long; of pink satin, innumerable odds and ends; then a magnificent brocaded train, in which the late laird's grandmother had been presented to Prince Charles at Holyrood.

Mabel grew quite excited and interested over all these treasures.

Then came a rouge-pot, and an ivory box of *mouches*, and then an old jewel-case of faded red morocco, which Lady Grisel put into Mabel's lap. In the first tray was a great *parure* of amethysts, a high comb sparkling with tiny brilliants which adorned the setting.

“This is beautiful!” exclaimed Mabel. “And so is this great bracelet of the *trois ors*. What

arms our ancestors must have had!" And she slipped the bracelet off and on her arms.

"I think the lace is underneath," said Lady Grisel; and raising the tray, Mabel found a parcel of fine old lace.

"I shall be able to make you as pretty as a queen when you go to Court next year," said Lady Grisel, smiling. "I have some diamonds you have never seen, and they shall all be reset for you."

"Oh, might I see them?" asked Mabel, eagerly.

"When you go to bed, you shall come to my room and see them. Now let us see if there is anything in the bottom of the box."

They found a number of miniatures carefully wrapped in paper. Lady Grisel took them up with a sigh. "I did not know that these were here," she said; "I am very glad to have found them again."

Mabel poured them into her lap.

"Who is this?" she said, holding out one of them—a badly-painted portrait of a boy of fourteen.

"That is my eldest son, poor Ewan," said Lady Grisel, softly. "His father did not think it good, and put it away."

"He must have been very handsome. Who is it this reminds me of so much? I cannot remember."

"He was very handsome: he was six feet two and a half in height, and he was wonderfully strong."

"Was he like Angus?"

"No, not at all; no one could have told that they were brothers. Ewan was a thorough Macmonach."

"And he was never married," said Mabel, thoughtfully. Lady Grisel looked at her inquiringly.

"No," she said, "he was never married."

"Was there not some one whom he wished to marry?" asked Mabel. "I asked Angus once, but he was very angry."

"Yes, there was some one."

"Oh, do tell me about her! I seem to know so little about you all; you do not mind, do you?" she said, timidly.

"It is a painful story," said Lady Grisel, "but it is right that you should know it. On Ewan's deathbed, this young girl whom he loved (her name was Assunta de' Caroli) appeared and claimed to be his wife,—she had her little child with her."

Mabel looked at Lady Grisel wonderingly. "And was she not his wife?" she said.

"No," said Lady Grisel, slowly, "or Dunmonaigh would not have belonged to Angus. After the funeral she brought her papers with her, which had been given to her by my son, purporting to be her marriage-lines and the baptismal register of the child. They were opened before witnesses, and proved to be blank paper."

"Oh, poor, poor girl!"

"He must have deceived her by a mock marriage," said Lady Grisel, with an effort. "I shall never get over the pain of that discovery."



"And where is she now?"

"Child, you forget how young you are; all this was eighteen years ago, and she died six months after Ewan."

"She died of a broken heart?"

"I think so. She refused all help, and at last when actual want was near, her appeal came too late. Master Malcolm sought her out, followed her to London, and found her in a workhouse dead."

"What a piteous story!"

"Put back the miniature, Mabel; telling that story, I cannot look at it."

"What became of the poor little child?"

"It was adopted by a very good kind couple who had no children of their own, but who loved poor little Margaret most dearly. She will, please God, have a happier fate than her mother. They changed their names, and we have quite lost sight of them for many years,—put it away, dear."

Mabel still held it in her hand. "I see now!" she cried, suddenly.

"What is it?"

"It is quite an extraordinary likeness."

"To whom?"

"Perdita Lovel, a friend of mine."

"What a curious name!" said Lady Grisel.

"Her father is quite a character, and has a mania for Shakespeare. The likeness is quite odd—exactly the same brow and short upper lip, and that curl of the lips, half proud, half sweet; but there the likeness ends. Dita is fairer, and her eyes such a dark brown, that, even

in spite of her fairness, she has been taken for an Italian."

Lady Grisel started. "Indeed!" she said. "And what are the parents' names? Perdita is such an unusual name."

"Lovel: they are quite *nouveaux riches*; but Dita is not the least like that."

"I wonder," began Lady Grisel, but checked herself. "Is she a great friend of yours?" she asked.

"Yes; she is so beautiful and charming. They are at Badfeld now, with mamma and Mildred, and Mary and Dick," she said, with a sigh.

They put back the miniature in its place, and by the time they had examined the whole contents of the box it was eleven o'clock, and time to go up stairs.

They went into Lady Grisel's room, that she might fulfill her promise of showing Mabel the diamonds.

"Which is the room in which poor Ewan died?" said Mabel, shuddering.

"Never mind, child; if you thought of such things, every room in every old house would be haunted by the past. Look here."

She opened the door of an old japanned cabinet, and drew out the drawers.

"These are fine stones," she said, putting a *rivière* into Mabel's hands, "but all these others want resetting;" and she showed her a number of old-fashioned jewels, combs, and long earrings, and diamond flowers trembling on gold wires.

"And you will really have them set for me?" asked Mabel, with childish pleasure.

"Yes, we will make designs for them ourselves, if you like. Now go to bed, my child. Good night. God bless and keep you."

And Mabel went away.

About half an hour later came a timid little knock at the door, and Mabel, as white as her white robes, came in. "Oh, may I sleep with you?" said she, entreatingly; "I cannot sleep alone—I never have slept alone in all my life. Milly was always there, for I am so silly and frightened: she was much braver."

"Poor little thing!" said Lady Grisel; "yes, you shall sleep with me."

"I cannot help fancying mine might be the room where Ewan died," said Mabel, shivering, "and that his wife might come in and upbraid him there."

Mabel was soon asleep, but Lady Grisel lay long awake, thinking sadly. She felt as a gardener might feel who had some strange exotic intrusted to his care, and no means of warming and fostering it. She looked down on Mabel's sleeping face, with her soft brown hair tossed round it, and she heard her murmur in her sleep, "Yes, mamma, Milly and I always do." In her dreams she was a child again.

"Poor wee thing, she is only a child now—a little soft young thing," she said to herself; "how could her mother have sent her away so soon?"

Far away in Badfeld, Lady Armine was thinking the same thing: that she had been

wrong in allowing Mabel to leave her so soon ; and that whatever Lord Armine might urge about the ten children, the expensive eldest son, and the excellence of a match, should not induce her to part with Mildred so soon. But *l'homme propose, et Dieu dispose*. Jack Lee Aston had arrived at Badfeld, and, after all, Mildred was far older and more developed in mind than her heart's darling Mabel.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

JACK LEE ASTON tapped at one of the windows of the Bellevue *chalet*, and begged for admittance. Mrs. Lovel was just making preparations to move, and Jack lent a strong arm to help to wheel her out into her customary place in the veranda.

"You have come very early to-day," she said, smiling. "Dita has not come back from her German lesson at No. 95."

"I wanted to know whether you would take tickets for the grand concert to-night in the Kurhaus of the Schweitzerhof."

"I had not heard of it; is it to be good?"

"If half a yard of orange-colored programme signifies anything, it will be grand," he answered.

"I wish you could go yourself," he said, with kind eagerness. "We can make it quite easy for you—we can have your sofa taken there."

"You are very kind," she said, smiling, and holding out her hand; "but now I care for nothing but rest—floating peacefully down the river of life."

"This place will quite set you up again, I hope," he said. She gently shook her head.

"Have you come about the concert?" said Andrew, coming in. "I have sent my courier to

take places for ourselves, so if you are all going we had better try to sit together. How hot it is!" he said, wiping his brow.

"Awfully hot. I got a note from Lady Norton this morning, asking me to go over to Como, but I can't stand the heat. If it was not so pleasant here, I would be off home again in no time. Ah! there is Dick, come with a message, I have no doubt."

The breathless little boy ran up.

"Mamma wants to know whether Mrs. Lovel and Dita are going to the concert?" he panted; "and oh, Jack, there is a snake in the garden—such a beauty! and Miss Benton won't let me touch it, though it is as dead as dead, and I want to put it in a bottle with wine, to keep it,"—he stopped.

"I will come and look at it, my boy," said Jack. "So you will not come yourself, Mrs. Lovel? If you only knew how easy it would be."

"No, no, my dear, thank you all the same for your kind thought. I lie out here quite late these warm nights, and you shall all come and tell me about it afterward."

"Mamma said I was to tell you that she is coming to see you in half an hour," said Dick.

"Very well; now I won't keep you from the snake any more," she said, smiling.

Jack and the child went off to the spot where a poor snake had been killed. It was a yard long, bright green and white, and about the thickness of a good-sized walking-stick. Jack thought him far too much injured for preserva-

tion; and they walked on to the hotel to see if the German lesson was not at an end.

"Do you see that little beast?" said Dick, pointing to a fairy-like little girl about his own age, exquisitely dressed, with a tight little waist and flowing sash. "Would you believe it, she is the most cruel little wretch going. I have watched her for half an hour together catching one butterfly after another, crunching them all up in her horrid little hands; and one day she caught one of those great grasshoppers that come bouncing in at night, and she and her French nurse stuck a pin through it, and there was she, rushing about with it wriggling on a card; but I will punish her yet. I got one of mamma's long bonnet-pins and a newspaper yesterday, and ran after her and told her I was going to pin her down for a little time, but she shrieked so frightfully that I was obliged to let her go. There, she sees me!" Dick threw up his arms and shouted "*Ich komme!*" and the child fled with a shrill shriek.

At the sound Lady Armine, who had just appeared at the door, hurried toward them.

"Dick, you are very naughty. I will not have that child frightened. Fancy!" she said, turning to Jack, "I had a letter from her mother yesterday, saying that she entreated me to control '*Monsieur mon fils*,' for that her little girl had had an '*attaque de nerfs*' yesterday from something he had said to her. Run in, Dick, and tell your sisters to make haste."

"Are they going out walking now?"

"Yes: it is very hot, but they are going

through the trees up to that little *châlet* to sketch; it is sheltered there even at mid-day."

"May I go with them?" he said, coaxingly.

She looked at him for a moment, and then smiled.

"Ought I let you go with them?" she said.

"Oh, you have heard from Lord Armine?" he exclaimed. "I see you have; he forbid me to speak to you till he had written to you himself."

"Yes, I have heard from him," she said, with an irrepressible sigh; "so instead of going with the girls, I want you to come and have a talk with me."

Jack's face beamed with delight.

"How kind you are!" he exclaimed.

"There they are! run and tell them that we will come and see how they get on with their sketches by-and-by. Please, Miss Benton," she continued, "do not let Mary walk too fast. I suppose you have an air-cushion? Yes, Dick, you may carry it. Good-by."

Then Lady Armine took Jack's arm, and they walked away into the woods.

Perdita, instead of accompanying the sketching party, brought her books and some work and sat in the veranda with Mrs. Lovel. She looked very pale and thoughtful, and slowly drew her needle in and out.

"My little silent mouse," said Mrs. Lovel, gently, "what are you thinking about?"

"I was thinking about a very odd letter I have had this morning from Sir Edward Norton. I think it cannot really be meant for me."



"What an odd thing! let me hear what he says, dear."

"I will read it to you," said Dita, half laughing as she unfolded it. "See, there is the address as clear as it can be—'Bellevue, Schweitzerhof, Badfeld, Suisse;' there is no mistake about that—and this is the letter." She read—

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—Most heartily do I congratulate you on your prospects of wealth and power. I rejoice with all my heart. She is an old trump. I have still the 'ammer, 'ammer, 'ammer,' still the 'ard 'igh road' we spoke of long ago; and when that entrancing short cut appeared I found the leap a real 'bulfinch,' and my pride too sorry a jade to rise to it. I am better mounted now; and—a truce to metaphor—I have made up my mind to try my luck. My dear old friend, wish me God-speed for '*il y va de ma vie*.'—Yours ever,

"E. D. NORTON."

"My dear, it is perfect Greek to me," said Mrs. Lovel, laughing. "How very funny! He must have been careless, and put it into the wrong envelope; let me look at it. There must be a letter to you in somebody else's pocket."

The color flushed into Dita's face.

"Probably some message from Lady Norton," said Mrs. Lovel, quietly. "She said that she had rheumatism in her hand last time I saw her, and it may have made it difficult for her to write."

"Very likely," said Perdita.

At about two o'clock, when it was nearly time for luncheon, the oleanders were pushed aside, and Jack appeared in the veranda.

"I beg ten thousand pardons, Miss Lovel," he said. "I have a letter for you in my pocket, it came directed to me, and I only saw the first, 'My dear Miss Lovel,' to show me the mistake; and here it is."

"Ah! then this is for you," said Perdita, producing her letter.

"Oh, thanks; how stupid of Norton!" and glancing at it, he said, "I suppose you read it; it is about—a horse," and he blushed as vivid a blush as her own; they both laughed awkwardly.

"We shall meet at the concert to-night," said Jack; and raising his hat he disappeared—his light step, his shining blue eyes all showed that his suit was prospering.

Little did Edward Norton imagine the fate of his two letters as he restlessly rowed about on the beautiful lake of Como. The letter to Perdita had taken him hours to write and rewrite; that to Jack had been dashed off in half a moment. He had felt a need of sympathy and knew he should find it there. In his mother he had found none. From the moment of his telling her the true history of Perdita's birth, she and his uncle had left no stone unturned to drive her from his thoughts. For a time they succeeded; but the first shock of the announcement having passed off, his love for the beautiful orphan returned tenfold. He would throw reason to the winds: he would only promise to

wait for three months for their sakes; after that, he would no longer be controlled. The three months expired, and the letter was written. He was reading it over for the last time, when his mother called him; they were waiting for him to go out with them. The letter to Jack lay open still; he folded both, put them in,—his mother called again,—hastily sealed them, and they went. Lady Norton wisely determined to make the best of it. She was very fond of Perdita, and under other circumstances nothing could have delighted her more; but Mr. Norton went off to England in high dudgeon.

"Run up stairs and read your letter, my child," said Mrs. Lovel, tenderly; "luncheon is never punctual:" and Dita flew away. She did not return till Mr. Lovel had come in, and luncheon was ready.

In the afternoon Nannie went out for the short drive she was still able to take with her husband; and Perdita, instead of joining her young friends, spent the whole afternoon in her own little room. She was not alone again with her mother till about six o'clock, when Andrew always went to the reading-room to look at the papers. Then Dita nestled up to her sofa and said—

"I want you to read the letter, mammie, and the answer I have written." She put both into her hands.

"You have considered well, and asked for God's help, darling, have you?"

"I think I have done right," she answered, with a little sob.

Mrs. Lovel opened the letter and read it:—

“MY DEAR MISS LOVEL,—I hardly venture to address you without beginning by saying, that unless circumstances had prevented me, I should have written this letter long ago. You must have seen during that most precious time in which we were so much together, that my feelings toward you had grown far beyond the bounds of warmest friendship; now, though months have passed since I have seen you, I am more than ever convinced that the happiness of my life lies in your hands, and entirely depends upon your acceptance or rejection of my suit. Will you be my wife, and make me the happiest individual on God’s earth?—Yours most truly,

“E. D. NORTON.

“My address will be, ‘*post restante*, Cadenabbia.’”

“Before you read my answer, mammie,” said Perdita, laying her hand on her own letter, “listen to me. You know that the circumstances to which he alludes, are not circumstances at all, but feelings. I have interpreted his letter to Mr. Lee Aston very clearly, and I know his character so well,” she said, the tears rising to her eyes. “He is so proud that he will find it difficult to realize that I can be as proud as he is.”

“Child, child! have you refused him?”

“Yes, mammie;” and Dita hid her face.

“Darling, do you know what you are doing? Dita, do you love him?”

"Yes, yes, I do love him, mammie, and he loves me—loves me so much that he would make what he deems a very great sacrifice for me; but I will never marry him—never, never!" she cried, with increasing vehemence. "No bar-sinister shall ever disgrace his shield."

"My dear, what do you mean?"

"Never mind, mammie," she said, smiling drearily. "It is better so; I could not leave you, and you cannot wish to send me away. Read my letter, mammie."

Mrs. Lovel took it up, sorely troubled.

"MY DEAR SIR EDWARD, — Forgive me, please forgive me the pain I must give you. I cannot be your wife. Try to think of it no more. I feel most deeply that you love me so much that you would sacrifice yourself for me. I do not accept the sacrifice. I will pray for you that you may forget,

"PERDITA."

Mrs. Lovel lay back and shut her eyes; one of her overwhelming attacks of palpitation had come on. Perdita, pale and dry-eyed, attended to her, administering the usual remedies. When she had somewhat recovered she bade Dita sit by her again.

"Darling, you have made up your mind?" she said, feebly.

"Yes, quite, quite, mammie," said Perdita, wistfully. "I have never asked you before what was my mother's name? and where did you see her first?"

"I found her, darling, in the workhouse?"

A sharp shiver passed through the girl's frame.

"She had become so very poor, and you were so young, she thought it better to go there. Her name was Assunta de' Caroli; she told me that she was the daughter of an Italian, but she spoke English like an Englishwoman;" she stopped, breathless.

"Assunta de' Caroli," repeated Perdita, still with her face hidden; "and was she—like a lady?"

"Yes, dearie—a true, well-born lady. She had large brown eyes that shone so wistfully in her white wan face; she was very thin, poor little thing, but I could see she must have been quite beautiful."

"And," said Dita, hesitatingly, "did she speak of my father? Oh, mammie, do you know his name?"

"Darling, must you know? His name was Ewan Macmonach."

"Macmonach! Mammie, mammie!"

"Yes, dearest; Angus Macmonach's elder brother."

"Oh, does any one know?" she said, shivering.

"No, darling, your father took care that no one should ever know; perhaps that has been a mistake," she said softly to herself. Perdita was sobbing now, and clinging closely to her.

"She gave you to me for my very own," said Nannie, tearfully—"to be all my own; and she

smiled and thanked God when she saw you in my arms. And you have been happy, darling, have you not?"

"Mother! my life has been one long joy."

"God bless you, child, for saying that; I will tell Assunta—soon."

## CHAPTER XXV.

THE little party of English made their way to the room in which the concert was to be held, about half-past eight. They had to cross part of the garden, for the large room of the Kurhaus was the place chosen for the evening's amusement.

Lady Armine took Dita's arm, and began asking her kindly about Nannie, whom she had thought to be looking rather frail during the last two days.

Jack and Mildred walked together, and the schoolroom party followed.

The room was half full; the courier had secured two rows of seats, rather in the background, where the music would be best heard.

There were several children present, and in one of the foremost chairs sat Dick's little foe, Mademoiselle Hermine.

Dick saw her at once, but his attention was taken up by a fat little King Charles, that lay by its mistress, panting asthmatically.

"It is a civil little dog, Milly," he said, in a loud whisper, "but it does not speak English; *komm hier*," he added, insinuatingly; but as it only curled up its face, and showed its gleaming white teeth, he desisted.



"It wants to listen to the music. Oh! look, Mary!" he cried; "there is the Banshee in a low gown, with bare arms; is she going to sing?"

There was a general hush of expectation, for the Banshee was a famous pianoforte-player, a professional from the concert-rooms of Vienna.

Her long sonata bored Dick almost beyond endurance. It was a little better when a long-haired young German tenor sang a plaintive *chanson d'amour*,—it ended gracefully on the minor D, when to every one's horror Mademoiselle Hermine's voice was raised in a piercing shriek on the E flat, and the discord made every well-tuned German ear vibrate with agony.

The child was carried off by her parents, one on each side, kissing and addressing her as "*Ma chérie, mon ange*;" "*mais qu'as tu?*"

Jack bent down to Dick and said severely, "What did you do?"

"I only just held up this," answered Dick, looking unnaturally innocent; and he showed his mother's long bonnet-pin concealed in his hands. It was of course confiscated; and a pale German girl, a beginner from the Vienna Conservatoire, sang Brahms's lovely "*Wiegenlied*" quite charmingly, and was very much applauded.

Dita all the time sat listening as if she was in a dream. The music seemed to soothe and lull the sort of aching feeling the constant excitement of the day had produced. A few whispered words from Lady Armine had told her that Mildred's fate was now in her own hands—that permission had been given to Jack to try and win her.

The thought came flashing across her, did they know that, if she had so willed it, she might have been Jack's wife now? and she was half amused. Would it have been a happy fate? Her heart answered "no," as distinctly as if she could see Edward Norton's dark earnest eyes actually present, and the constantly varying expression she knew so well. When she thought of the morning's letter, she felt she had gained much; she might love him now, she might tell herself that no one would ever be to her what he had been; she might treasure the knowledge now, locked up, and kept as a possession for life. It seemed a little strange to her to see how quickly Jack had been cured; but she felt that Mildred might be well content, for he was strong and good and brave, and possessed a manly humility and resignation to the inevitable. Yes, Mildred would be very happy.

Mendelssohn's duet from the "*Lieder ohne Worte*" began—that lovely speaking and answering of two sad airs of which so many interpretations have been made. It was beautifully played by the Banshee,—so beautifully that the audience encored it, and broke the spell.

"Oh, is it to be all over again?" said Dick, piteously. Jack charitably supplied him with a piece of string. The last chords were still sounding, when there was a little commotion in the crowd gathered round the door, and Perdita saw the face of Mrs. Lovel's maid looking anxiously in, very pale and disturbed. She jumped up and touched Andrew.

"Daddy, there is Summers; she looks as if

she wanted us. I am afraid that mother is not so well!"

"Shall I come with you, dear?" said Lady Armine.

"Oh no, thanks; it is very likely nothing worse than usual. Please come when the concert is over;" and they went hastily away.

"What is it, Summers?" asked Perdita, as they reached the Bellevue; for the maid had run on without waiting, and met them at the door of Mrs. Lovel's room.

"Mrs. Lovel is in a very bad faint, miss," she answered. "I sent and asked Dr. Schafhaus to come in, and ran to fetch you."

They went in. Nannie was in a death-like fainting fit, and nothing seemed to revive her.

The doctor shook his head gravely when Perdita looked at him. "It is the beginning of the end," he said to her in German, which Andrew did not understand. Perdita felt as if her heart would break, but she was quite calm, and set herself to do what the doctor told her.

After about an hour Nannie opened her eyes with a long soft sigh. She was silent, and her eyes wandered from one to another with a wondering, scarcely conscious expression.

"Her strength is at its lowest ebb," whispered the doctor. "You must try to get it up by every means."

About half-past ten Lady Armine arrived, and offered to stay all night, which they thankfully accepted. The doctor desired that Summers should go to bed, that there might be one quite fresh in the morning. Andrew seemed

thoroughly stunned: he said nothing, but sat holding Nannie's hand in his, and looking at her without moving, and they let him stay.

Every now and then the deadly faintness came back, terrifying the watchers. Perdita felt as if she should not have known how to bear it without Lady Armine's calm experience and active help, who told her what to do, and who was full of resource. When morning dawned they trusted that the worst was over, for Nannie slept.

Lady Armine and Perdita urged Andrew to follow their example and go to bed for a few hours, leaving Summers and the doctor both with the patient; and he allowed himself to be persuaded.

Perdita did not wake till two o'clock, and she found Lady Armine already back in the Bellevue. Her ladyship would not let her return until she had eaten something, and made Mildred see that she did so.

Nannie's condition appeared to have changed: there was a pink flush on her cheeks, and a light in her blue eyes, and she seemed to be wandering. It was piteous to see how Andrew seemed in that one night to have become quite an old man, looking helplessly from Perdita to Lady Armine for comfort and encouragement. The doctor said that nothing more could be done but to watch for every change. Her pulse was fast and intermittent, and she was not conscious.

They sat by her all the day, forestalling with strong restoratives the tendency to fainting. In the evening they were startled by hearing her

say, almost in her natural voice, "Andy, are you there?"

"Yes, wife, I am holding your hand."

"I have asked mother, honey, and she says we may walk together after church, and take the children after the blackberries; there are so many this year by Goodman's style. Daisy does nothing but low all day, and I cannot make her happy; she had better go back to the Islands."

"She is wandering," said Lady Armine, softly.

"She is living again in the past," said Andrew, dreamily. "Nannie, wife, Daisy died long ago."

"I remember," she said—"I was making a cowslip ball, for the wine was finished, and mother gave me the rest of the flowers,—I remember Daisy would not touch her food, and I gave her the cowslip ball, and she ate that," and she laughed faintly.

"Those were bright days, Nannie," murmured Andrew.

"It is very pretty, Andy," she went on, her eyes wandering around. "And it is like you to have filled that jug with wallflowers. I shall get used to town after a bit. Let me put out mother's loaf,—nothing so pure as home-made bread in London."

"You were happy, wife?"

"Oh yes, I'll be happy after a bit, but it comes strange when you've been used to the country; and you'll put up with me if I am dazed-like at first?"

"I was not patient enough, Nannie."

"Never say that, honey. I am not clever—I can't always understand what you say; but you are rarely good to me, and I would not have cried over a hasty word if I had not been so muddled to-day. I am a silly and ignorant body for you to love, Andy."

"No, dear, dear wife."

Still her fancy went wandering on—sometimes she was walking in the lanes with her clever young London lover, sometimes fretting over the blacks that would sully the white curtains she prized. And so for three days it went on, Andrew always sitting by her, and answering as though he shared and followed her thoughts in a very strange way. One day was very sad: she thought she held her little child in her arms, and rocked it, and spoke to it as though it lived, and then held it dead to her breast, and fought that they might not take it away; but after that it was always the same soft babbling of green fields and rural games, and work—and she repeated simple village hymns one after another.

And there was nothing to be done; nature had broken down—there was only the waiting till the feeble light should flicker out.

Mildred came one morning to the door of the *chalet* and knocked very softly. Perdita came out, looking very worn and pale.

"I have called to say that mamma is coming, and she wishes you to come out for a little while with me, Dita," she said, kissing her affectionately.

"I will come; mother is very quiet now, and

Summers is with her. Thank you, dear Milly, it will do me good."

She went for her hat, and they walked together up into the wood, and sat down on a bench. It was very hot, but a gentle breeze played among the trees, and brought a sweet scent of syringa on the air.

A memory of what seemed long ago flashed across Dita, and she looked round at her companion. Mildred's grave sweet face was full of thought.

"Dear Mildred," said Dita, softly, "is all settled now?"

"I did not like to disturb you with my happiness," she answered, kissing her.

"I am so glad, so very glad," said Perdita. "You will be very happy, Milly; and I——"

The words escaped involuntarily, but Mildred did not hear them.

The two girls wandered on; the wood was alive with insect-life; the birds sang, the grasshoppers kept up their merry chirp. They stood for a moment over a tiny pond, half choked with its growth of tangled water-lilies: the frogs croaked hoarsely; and great dragon-flies whirled past, their steel-like bodies gleaming in the sun.

Then Perdita turned from this world of light and love, and went back to the monotonous pain of watching that life, so dearly loved, wane slowly.

Night came, and Nannie's voice ceased, and she became very still.

Lady Armine, very tired, had gone home to

rest, leaving Perdita and Andrew that night-watch. For the last two nights Andrew had refused to leave his wife.

Eleven o'clock struck—twelve—and she still seemed to sleep. The lamp was burning very low, and Dita went softly to trim it.

There was a slight movement ; Nannie's white hand, groping outside the sheets till it met Andrew's, and there rested. Presently she spoke, and her faint whisper sounded clearly—"Andy, some one told me that there were crimson oleanders on the shores of the lake of Gennesaret, where the Saviour is waiting to heal the sick. The sun is setting, and he bids me go to Him walking on the water ; it is so blue, and it seems as if I must sink ; but He is calling me, and I must go."

"Nannie—wife!" cried Andrew, "wait for me! a little while!"

"I cannot wait," she said, slowly; "I see Him on the shore, and voices are bidding me come. Good-by, honey—good-by!"

Perdita and Andrew bent over her in terror. She murmured something about the beautiful crimson flowers—then suddenly a light came into her eyes, as of a flash of returning consciousness. Her voice was very feeble now.

"Andrew, sweetheart, I am going fast."

"Nannie, darling Nannie, have pity! do not go."

"Kiss me, Dita, darling! Go—leave me with him now."

Solemnly Perdita bent down, and gave a long still kiss, then she stole away.



"Open the window, Andy," gasped the dying woman. "Give me light and air!"

He rose to his feet, and drew up the wooden blinds; a pale light, half from the moon, half from the first tinge of daylight, stole into the room.

"Andy," she said, her words coming slowly, "it is hard to part."

"I cannot let you go," he moaned.

"Nothing but death could part us two, Andy." She put her feeble hand on his bowed neck,— "hold me in your arms—there, closely, closer still;—raise me. We are together still. Look out there, when all is over, you will see the sun rise up again, and the world go on as if I was with you—with you still."

"And I, Nannie! I?"

"Come—soon."

The pale light flooded into the room, the night-lamp flickered up and went out suddenly, and there was perfect silence.

Perdita had awakened Summers, and they had sent for the doctor, for her heart told her that the end was near; and when they heard no sound, they waited a while, and then went in.

All was dim, and the doctor hastily stepped back and brought a light; Nannie was lying with her sweet face looking toward the window, and Andrew with his arms still round her, as he had laid her down, and his head was buried on the pillow.

He rose up when they spoke to him, with a smile on his face, and let Perdita take his hand.

"She has gone before," he said, "but only for a little while." And she led him away.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

THEY were dreary miserable days that followed. Lady Armine was very anxious to get back to England, for her husband kept writing to press for her return, and Mary's term of eighteen baths was accomplished; but she would not leave Perdita till all the arrangements were over, and news had come that the sad unattended funeral had taken place at Salford.

Mr. Lovel was in no condition to travel quickly, and Dr. Schafhaus strongly urged that he should not be disturbed in any way until he had somewhat recovered from the stupor into which he seemed to have sunk. It was Jack who made every arrangement,—to whom Perdita appealed for help as she would have done to a brother.

Jaques was traveling in Spain, and it seemed probable that the letters were following him from place to place.

Lady Armine was consoled in leaving Perdita by her assurance that he would come to Badfeld the very moment he heard of what had happened.

Dita drove down to the station to see them off, and on the way she could hardly suppress her tears. They had nearly half an hour to wait

in the new, highly-varnished *salle d'attente*, and she felt as if every moment were a reprieve. Lady Armine made her promise to write often, and to let them know her plans, and how poor Andrew went on; and the three girls kissed and embraced each other warmly.

The little tinkling bell began at last, and the large German train rolled into the station.

"I have never thanked you, I have not known how to thank you," said Perdita, as Lady Armine pressed her in her arms.

"God bless you, my dear child. Good-by."

They were hurried off to take their places, and she could no longer see Jack waving his hat out of the window. Then she went sadly back to the *chalet*.

Andrew was always sitting in the veranda among the oleanders. Perdita used to light his little carved pipe and give it to him, but it always went out, and he laid it down. She was frightened at his apathy, and longed eagerly for Jaques to come.

Then about the end of August the weather changed. One night Perdita was awakened by the roar of the wind which came rushing through the valley: it was so wild and loud that she rose up and stole into Andrew's room to see if he also was awake. No, he was sleeping heavily without movement; and she went back to her room and with some difficulty succeeded in closing the shutters firmly.

The next morning the valley was full of clouds which lay in white solid masses along the sides of the hills, and the trees were bend-

ing almost double in the storm. All the gayly-dressed people disappeared from garden and balconies, the band sounded faintly from within the Kurhaus, and the shattered flowers of the oleanders strewed the walks.

Andrew was driven indoors, and sat bending over his desk, vainly trying to write letters.

For two days the wind blew and the valley was thick with clouds, then it went down suddenly, and a thick pelting rain began to fall incessantly. They were chilled with the damp; and Badfeld was so completely a summer place, that there were no means of warming the rooms.

At last Andrew, to Dita's great delight, said that he wished to go home. The very fact of his expressing a wish was something gained. Jaques had not been heard of, but Dita knew that he often traveled without leaving his address, and though distressed she was not surprised. She made every arrangement; and on one day, still more wet and dreary than usual, they bade adieu to Badfeld, and started on their long journey to Bâle.

Dita felt her spirits rise as they emerged from the valley into the open country, gradually, as they left the mountains behind them, getting into finer weather. They did not reach Bâle till night, and Andrew was so tired and worn out that Dita was afraid to push on their journey as she had intended, and devised with the courier a route by which they would best shorten the traveling for each day. The first day to Troyes, the second to Sens, the third to Paris.

They reached Troyes late on Saturday night, and Andrew went at once to bed. Dita hoped that by resting there on Sunday, he would be able to go on on Monday, but she was disappointed. The next morning he was unable to rise from his bed, and suffered from violent pains in the head and limbs. The hotel was but an old-fashioned inn, the up-stairs rooms opening into an open-air gallery on wooden pillars which ran all round the little square court-yard. The rooms were quiet and clean, but very few travelers seemed to pass through Troyes: and Dita felt it would be terribly lonely if Andrew's indisposition increased to a severe illness.

She sent for the doctor, who had nothing to recommend but a soothing *tisane* and patience. And she could only sit by Andrew, bathing his brow, and soothing him, and feeling very helpless and disconsolate.

On the Saturday afternoon, two days after the Lovels had left Badfeld, Sir Edward Norton arrived there with Lady Norton and Miss Grey. They had heard from Jack Lee Aston of poor Nannie's death, and Lady Norton had come to Badfeld full of kind intentions toward Perdita; and they were all disappointed to find that they had gone. Dr. Schafhaus told them that he thought they would go very slowly home, for that Mr. Lovel was in a very low, weak state. And in hope of overtaking them, they pursued their journey to Bâle.

Sir Edward found out privately from the hotel manager that the Lovels had gone on to

Troyes; and as his mother and cousin wished to see the sights of Bâle, he professed an extreme desire to visit the old churches at Troyes, and went off by himself, promising to rejoin them at Paris or at Fontainebleau, which they had also wished to include in their tour.

He traveled all Monday afternoon, and arrived at the hotel, walking from the station with a porter to carry his portmanteau. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and as he came into the little court-yard, he found all the servants of the inn sitting round a table eating a savory *potage aux croustons*.

He began by asking for a room, and was taken into the open gallery up stairs by the fussy landlady, who never ceased talking. She showed him a large room with a slippery waxed floor, where he deposited his luggage.

"Yes, there were some English here," the landlady informed him; "an old gentleman who was ill, and his daughter. They had arrived on the Saturday, and were to have proceeded on Monday, but he was not well enough to go."

Sir Edward sent away his hostess. It was too late to disturb the Lovels that night, being nearly ten o'clock; so he lit a cigar and sat out on the gallery looking down into the court. The servants had finished their supper and withdrawn; the moon shone down from a clear purple sky, throwing the old wooden staircase and balconies into strong and picturesque relief. In the court below a white cat glided across, her velvet paws making not the slightest sound; far

away in the street, a workman going home sang a gay little song to his lady-love. Sir Edward leant his head on his hand, and felt the profound silence as an infinite rest.

Presently one of the doors opened, and he saw some one come out and advance slowly toward him. An instinct told him who it was before he even saw the slender figure, the fair head drooping with sad dejection.

He rose to his feet and tossed away his cigar. Dita started when she saw him and would have passed on, but he moved a step forward.

"It is I, Miss Lovel; do you not know me?"

She drew back a step, putting her hand to her brow, and then held it out to him tremblingly.

"You,—you here!" The impulse was almost irresistible to rush forward to try to comfort her, to pour out his story of love, but he controlled himself with an effort.

"I wish, I do so wish to be of service to you, if only you will let me. I have come to——"

Dita withdrew her hand.

"No, no, Miss Lovel; dear Dita, do not be afraid—I will say nothing about that, I will forget it; think of nothing to distress you. I promise, you must let me help you as I would a sister. Oh Dita!"

For she leant one hand on the balustrade, and covering her face with the other, could not restrain her tears. With a rigid resolve to be fraternal—paternal even—he made her sit down on his chair, and half sitting on the balustrade himself, waited until she had dried her eyes.

"It is such a relief to see you," she said.

"Ah, you have no one with you! poor Dita!"

"The courier left us this morning," said Dita, raising her eyes and trying to smile. "He would have missed an engagement he had made for a very long journey if I had kept him any longer, and of course I could not detain him against his will."

"The brute! He was bound to stay. I will see that he does not escape for such a breach of engagement. Have you no one else?"

"Only our maid Summers; she is a great comfort, but she cannot speak a word of French. I cannot tell you the relief of seeing some one whom I know."

"And where is Caliban? What does he live for, but to be of use to you?"

"His letters have not reached him I suppose, for I have not heard a word from him. I wish he had come abroad with us."

"Tell me about your father,—is he really very ill?"

"I don't understand his condition. Oh, if I only had Dr. Grant here for five minutes! The doctor here says that he must on no account move for at least three weeks."

"I will see about that to-morrow."

"Oh, thank you—thank you for coming!"

"I would do anything," he began, but abruptly left off.

"Good night," said Dita, rising. "It is very late, and I was going to bed."

"So soon! could you not wait a little longer?"

"I was up all last night," said Dita wearily,



"and I would talk to you if I could, but I cannot hold up my head."

"Poor little Dita," he said, in a tone of inexpressible tenderness. "Then go to bed. Tell me, ought any one to sit up with your father to-night?"

"Summers is there," she said, dreamily. He put her candle into her hand, and saw her go down the gallery to the door of her own room. Then he lit another cigar, and walked out into the moonlit town.

Dita was so worn out, that she was asleep before her head touched the pillow.

The next morning she was only roused by her maid, who came in with a cup of coffee; she brought a message from Sir Edward, begging her not to get up, and saying that he had given Mr. Lovel his breakfast, and would see the doctor and receive his orders. Dita turned her head, and with a delicious feeling of security, was asleep again before her maid had left the room.

About two o'clock she came down with a guilty feeling that she had been neglecting her duty, and hurried to Mr. Lovel's room. He was out of bed and sitting propped up by pillows in a large armchair, Edward Norton beside him, reading aloud an English newspaper.

There was a more lifelike and less painful expression on the old man's face than it had worn since the death of his wife, and he looked up and actually smiled as Dita came in.

"You have had a long rest, my love," he said, "and you look the better for it."

Edward, looking at Dita, thought she must have looked ill indeed if this was better; his heart ached to see how pale and thin she was, and how large her dark eyes had grown during those few weeks.

"I know something of doctoring, Miss Lovel," said he—"gained during the time that I have been knocking about in the world, and I hope you will approve of my change of treatment. I gave your father a beefsteak for breakfast."

Dita looked horrified.

"I think it has done me good, dear," said Andrew, feebly; "I was so tired of beef-tea."

"And this afternoon we will get him out a little way," said Sir Edward, cheerily; "I have got a very decent *voiture de remise*, and the air is delicious to-day."

Dita could see that Andrew was better for the change of treatment, and she resolved to trust Edward implicitly.

Luncheon came for Andrew; delicate soup made with Summer's best skill; but Sir Edward insisted upon taking him up a wing of chicken from their dinner down stairs, and sending away the omelet.

He helped him tenderly into the carriage, and propped him up with cushions, bidding the coachman drive very steadily.

They went to the old cathedral, and Dita and Sir Edward got out to see it, leaving Andrew lying back quietly in the carriage enjoying the sweet fresh air.

In the evening the doctor called, and was

quite astonished at the improvement of pulse and general appearance in his patient. Sir Edward insisted on a private interview, and ascertained that what he suspected was true—that Andrew was suffering from complete nervous prostration, misunderstood by Dr. Schafhaus, who had allowed his strength to run down very low, by keeping him on an invalid diet.

It seemed very hard to take away this English *milord*, this layer of golden eggs, from the little old doctor; but he acknowledged, when pressed, that there was no real need to delay going homeward by short stages. Dita could scarcely believe the good tidings.

Next day came a letter from Lady Norton, from Fontainebleau; she had gone there with Miss Grey, and wrote a most alluring account of the delightful rooms they had engaged on the ground-floor, opening on to a pretty garden. They had had one drive in the Forest, which was enchanting. "If you have found Mr. Lovel and Dita," wrote Lady Norton, "do persuade them to come here and stay with us for a week or two. I will take great care of Mr. Lovel, and we will try amongst us to make them happy."

Edward read this part of his letter to Dita. She was very much tempted by the idea. Andrew had a great dread of returning home, and she longed for him to be stronger before he should have to pass through that ordeal. He also caught at the idea; so they moved to Sens, and from thence an hour's journey took them to Fontainebleau.

Lady Norton had engaged rooms as pleasant as her own for their reception, and she was there waiting, with an English tea spread out; and she welcomed Dita with a warm, motherly kiss, and petted her, and looked after her with the greatest care.

After they had been settled there for about three days, Edward Norton came into their sitting-room.

"I have come to say good-by, Miss Lovel."

"Good-by," she faltered.

"Yes, I am off to London; I did not tell you before. I am going to my chambers. I have my fortune to make." He tried to speak lightly.

Their hands met in one short grasp. Dita could not speak, but she raised her eyes and saw that his were looking down on her full of tears.

He was gone, and Dita sat down, feeling as if she were alone in the whole wide world.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

"**A**NGUS is going up to the moors, to-day," said Mabel Macmonach, coming into the turret-room where Lady Grisel was sitting.

"Is he? Has he asked any one to go with him?"

"He has asked Craigenlowe to join him with his new dogs,—the keepers have seen a great stag at the foot of Benichon."

"Then we must amuse ourselves, Mabel. Shall we go up to see some poor people this morning, or make one of the men row us about on the lake?"

"I am tired," said Mabel, plaintively; "and I want to write a long letter to Mildred; would you mind not going out till this afternoon?"

"I will go myself up to the farm," answered Lady Grisel, "for I hear that one of the twins is ill; but I shall not be long away, and you will be able to get through your letter without interruption."

"I have had such a happy letter from Milly," said Mabel, smiling; "she thinks no one in the world like her Jack."

"You like him very much, do you not?"

"He was a very nice, merry creature," said Mabel. "Not clever. I don't think him wor-

thy of Mildred ; but then no one can be worthy of her," she added, with all the partiality of a sister.

"I think all you tell me sounds very nice and happy," said Lady Grisel. "Does she tell you any plans yet, and where they are to live?"

"Yes; she tells me all about it," answered Mabel, beginning to arrange her writing materials. "They are to have a little house in London, somewhere in the South Kensington region, and that is to be their home; but they are to be a great deal with Miss Ashburn, who, although she is so deaf, is a very dear old lady, and is quite delighted, Milly says, that Jack is going to be married."

"Where does she live?"

"About twelve miles from the Lee Astons. Mamma and Milly are going there for her to make acquaintance with Miss Ashburn. They will be neighbors to Salford Abbey."

"Who lives at Salford Abbey?" said Lady Grisel, smiling.

"The Lovels,—pretty Perdita Lovel whom I have told you about."

"Ah, poor girl! I wonder how she is getting on since your mother left her! It must have been a wonderful comfort to her having Lady Armine there."

"Yes, indeed," said Mabel. "I must think of my wedding present for Mildred," she began. "I cannot make up my mind whether it shall be something very lovely for her house or an ornament. I suppose the house will be of most consequence, as she will be poor at first."

"Yes; but they will not always be poor, and an ornament lasts for ever."

"I am glad you think so," said Mabel, joyfully; "it is a much more interesting present."

Angus came in equipped for deer-stalking.

"You will be sure to send my letters to the post, Mabel," he said, in his measured tones.

"Yes, Angus, I shall not forget."

"Craigenlowe will sleep here to-night, in all probability, so be prepared. Good-by."

Lady Grisel and Mabel went out to the door to see them start. Mabel had a childish personal affection for all sorts of animals. She sat down on the steps while Angus was speaking to one of the keepers, and the dogs all came pressing round her, licking her hands and fawning on her, straining against their coupling.

"How can you let them lick you?" said Angus; but Mabel scarcely heard, for she had pushed away the dogs and was petting and caressing the thick-maned ponies.

"Where does Craigenlowe meet you?" asked Lady Grisel, shading her eyes from the sun, and looking away over the hills toward beautiful Benichon.

"At the burn. Now then." They whistled off the dogs and started. One of Mabel's favorites lingered behind, pressing up to her; Angus's whistle summoned him, and as he obeyed the call he was greeted by a sharp lash for loitering. She could not suppress a bitter little sigh as she turned into the house.

"Good-by, my child," said Lady Grisel,

looking in with her out-of-doors apparel on. Mabel was sitting at her desk, already intent upon her letter. "I shall not be very long. Good-by."

Mabel put down her pen and came up to Lady Grisel to be kissed.

"Give my love to Mildred," she said. "And, Mabel, you shall, if you like, search through all my old jewels to find something lovely for me to give to her."

"Thank you, you dearest and best of mothers," cried Mabel. She had never called her that before, and Lady Grisel went away with her heart full of loving tenderness toward her.

Mabel wrote on. The second full sheet was finished, and she had just begun a third, when a servant brought in a little screwed-up piece of paper.

"From Dunmonaigh, if you please, ma'am," he said. "And Willie was not to wait for an answer."

Mabel opened it, and a key fell out; she read these lines written inside an old envelope—

"I forgot that I had left a most important letter in my desk, directed to A. Smith, Esq., etc.; it is necessary that it should be sent off to-day. Please open my desk and you will find it ready sealed and stamped in the right-hand middle drawer: I send you the key."

The post did not go till one o'clock, so Mabel, in no hurry, finished and fastened up her letter, then she took up the key and went with it to Angus's room.



Her husband's sitting-room was very little known to the young wife. Very early in their married life, she had found out that she was not welcome there. Whenever she went in, he ceased any occupation on which he might be employed, and contrived to make her feel as if she was a visitor and an interruption to him; and as he did almost all his morning work there, she saw very little of him, and was too timid to attempt more.

It was a large, comfortable room, well filled with books, and with useful maps and papers. The bureau, which Angus always kept carefully locked, stood close to the fireplace; for he was of a very chilly nature, and often had fires burning when other people could not have borne them. The room had a northern aspect, and overhung the end of the loch.

Mabel, with the key in her hand, went up to the bureau, and, sitting down before it, unlocked it. The lid (it was a large, round-topped *secrétaire*) was heavy, but she succeeded in pushing it open. She opened the drawer that Angus had mentioned, but to her surprise, for he was very accurate, the letter was not there, and she proceeded with her search. The drawers were all set round an arch in the center of the bureau, with tiny ivory pillars and a little floor of ebony and ivory diapers. There she saw what was evidently the letter of which she was in search on the little floor, held down by an exceedingly heavy brass paper-weight. She took hold of it eagerly, she was so anxious to execute well this little commission her husband had given her.

Mabel had not calculated on the weight of the brass ornament; it slipped from her hand and fell with violence on to the ivory work. One of the little pillars was pushed back, evidently by the jar given to some strong spring, and under her very hand a secret drawer sprang out.

Mabel was much startled; the drawer was full of papers, and she was about to shut it hastily when her eye was attracted by one word, and she opened and read them.

Presently the bell of Angus's room pealed violently through the house. The butler, astonished at so unusual a sound, ran hastily to answer it.

Mabel was standing in front of the desk looking quite awful, as he expressed it afterward, her eyes wide distended and staring, her face blanched to a deadly whiteness.

"Lady Grisel, send Lady Grisel," she gasped.

Lady Grisel was just coming home from her walk, when she was met by the man running to meet her with a scared face. She did not wait till his story was over, but rushed into her son's room.

She found Mabel lying insensible on the ground, and strewn all over her the papers.

Lady Grisel caught them up in deadly terror: there was no mistaking their meaning; they were Ewan and Assunta's marriage certificates.

Before that night telegrams were speeding over the country: to Edinburgh for doctors; to Lady Armine, summoning her to come without a moment's delay.

All through the night there was running to and fro, and whispering and agonized prayers. Before the first blue light of morning paled the sky, a son was born to Dunmonaigh, and mother and child lay dead.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

LADY GRISEL came slowly into Angus's room; he sat before a table with his face hidden on his arms. She stood for one moment looking down on him unable to speak. He looked up at last with haggard eyes; she held the fatal papers in her hands.

"Tell me," he burst out, "mother, was it that that did it?"

"Yes," answered Lady Grisel, stonily. "First Assunta, now Mabel."

"And what do you mean to do now?" he said, as she sank down on a chair.

"Justice!"

She heard his long-drawn breaths, as if he were panting hard.

"You do not know what the temptation was," he said. "There were no other proofs, no witnesses. Others have survived such things, why not she? And you see I never destroyed them?"

"Angus, spare me that; the disgrace has killed your wife."

"Do not speak like that," he said, almost savagely: "you will drive me more mad than I am already."

"Then spare me your excuses."

"Mother, you are as hard as stone."

She made no answer. It was a strange scene in the early morning light: Lady Grisel pale and rigid, with a look of concentrated agony in her face, Angus pacing the room in his mud-spattered shooting-dress, as he had come in the evening before. At last he said, slowly, "What can I do?"

"Justice!" she repeated.

"To whom?"

"To Ewan's child."

"Does she still live?"

"We will move heaven and earth to find her, that you may atone for your sin."

"And have you thought of me, mother?" he said, clenching his teeth together. "Am I not also your son? Do you know to what you would condemn me?"

"God help me," she answered, her head sinking on her breast.

"I will not stay," he cried. "I have incurred the penalty of the law; the law will make me a beggar; the law will brand me as a felon—a felon! Do you hear?"

Her hands wrung together.

"So I shall go," he said, "that you may not have a felon for your son. You shall never see me more."

"Angus!"

"Do not try to stop me, mother," he cried, "or I shall go quite mad! Mabel! my Mabel! my pretty Mabel! I have a fire raging here," and he pressed his brow; "I can see nothing

but her eyes upbraiding me. Good God! I must go."

"You shall, Angus. It will be better so; but not now. You cannot leave her so."

"Say what you will, mother; that the papers have been found. Save the honor of the old name if you can. I will never come home to disgrace you."

Lady Grisel thought for one moment, and it seemed to her that it might be best that he should go. She was terrified at the wild blood-shot eyes and twitching hands.

"Angus!" she cried—"not to-night. Can you not stay and see her mother?"

A cry, strange and low, like the cry of some hunted animal, broke from his lips.

"Her mother!" he cried; "how can I meet her? How have I kept my trust?"

"Mabel loved you," she said, faintly, hoping to touch some softening chord; "she loved you, Angus."

"And I have killed her. Let me go."

He sprang toward the door; then suddenly coming back, he said, "I will write to you from London. I shall wait there till the child is found, but I will never come home."

"Will you not look at her once more, Angus? She looks very beautiful; she forgave you and loved you; your name was the last on her lips. Oh, my boy, do not go like this!"

"I cannot. You are cruel, mother—you torture me."

She clung passionately to him.

"Angus! you whom I have loved beyond all

others in this cruel world! you for whom I would have died, listen to me!"

"Oh, mother, mother!"

"I forgive you! Mabel has forgiven you, Angus—make Ewan's child forgive you in his name and his wife's; then down on your knees and pray, wrestle for a blessing, and in God's own time He also will forgive my son!"

"I will, God help me; let me go."

He crossed the hall, drew back the bolts, and went down upon the steps. She stood watching him as he undid the boat and stepped into it, her hands clasped in tearless agony.

"One last good-by," she said, stretching out her arms toward him.

"No, no! I am not worthy!" he answered.

He drew himself from her clinging arms, she saw him bending to the oars, and the little boat speeding across the water.

Long white streaks shone in the sky, brightening and brightening till they suddenly gleamed down like blades of shining steel athwart the loch, and the sun rose up, cold and white and brilliant.

Lady Grisel shivered, and the bitter cold of early morning chilled her through and through; she turned and went to Mabel's room and knelt down by her side.

Mabel was beautiful in death, she had smiled when they laid her baby in her arms, and the smile had rested there; all that might have been of grief and agony could never touch her now; and Lady Grisel kneeling by her, could only utter again and again, "Thank

God, oh thank God, that He has taken her home!"

About eleven o'clock that night poor Lady Armine arrived. Lady Grisel met her at the door, and her face told the tale her dry lips could not utter. Too late. The mother's grief at first was overwhelming. She had loved Mabel even more than her other children; there had always been something so clinging, so dependent about the child, that she had been their veriest darling.

Lady Grisel told the whole story without omitting one fact or making one excuse. It came from her lips as if wrung from her by the torture of the rack, but she told it all. She braced herself to bear the reproaches, the hard words she awaited, and she would have borne them all and thought that little; but instead of that, Lady Armine threw her kind arms round her neck, saying—

"Ah, Grisel, how much we both have suffered!"

Then came to her the relief of passionate tears. Lady Grisel felt drawn inexpressibly to her, and she poured out to her how dearly she had loved Mabel,—how hard she had striven to make her happy; and then all her terror and anguish over Angus came out, and the old story of having misunderstood and thwarted Ewan.

"I have ruined my sons!" she cried, in the strong self-abasement of a proud nature brought low; and Lady Armine found her own best comfort in trying to sustain her fellow-sufferer.



Toward the evening of the following day Lord Armine and Mildred arrived, and all had to be gone over again.

When night came they were all worn out, and all went to rest but Lady Grisel. She could not sleep; in vain she closed her eyes and tried to lull her aching thoughts. She could not rest: she wandered among the empty rooms down stairs; she took up the book Mabel was reading, the drawing on which she had been intent only two days ago; she found her long letter to Mildred on her desk, the half-finished designs for the setting of the diamonds, in which she had taken such a childish delight, all just as it had been,—and at last tears came to her relief.

The next morning she had a long interview with Lord Armine. He strongly advised that no unnecessary mystery should be made,—that the world should be told that the marriage of Ewan Macmonach had been proved by the finding of the necessary papers, and that Angus, glad to have something to do in the first agony of his bereavement, had gone away to look for the lost heir. As soon as the funeral should be over, they must at once take steps to make restitution to Ewan's child.

Lord Armine went up to the manse to see and talk over matters with the old Minister.

Master Malcolm was terribly shaken and distressed by all that had happened. He seemed so feeble and old, that at first Lord Armine thought that he would be of no use; but his memory was clear when he had recovered suf-

ficiently to collect his thoughts, and he supplied him with dates and names, and the address of the old shop in Edgar Street, Soho. He considered it sufficient ground to work upon.

The sad day came at last,—the funeral of the bride who had come to Dunmonaigh but one year ago. All the people in the country-side thronged together, and many eyes were wet with tears, and there were wondering murmurs at the absence of Angus Macmonach.

Two days after, Lady Grisel allowed herself to be persuaded to accompany the Armines to London, whither Lord Armine wished to return. Her silver-gray hair had grown as white as snow.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

LADY NORTON and the Lovels lingered on at Fontainebleau. The weather was charming with all the fresh sweetness of the air of France, and Andrew daily gained strength. Jaques joined them for a few days, and to talk to him seemed to do the old man real and lasting good. Poor Jaques! always covering strong feelings with uncouth reserve, no one knew how he missed the ever-ready sympathy poor Nannie had always given him. He devoted himself to Andrew with a touching devotion, obeying and forestalling his every wish. It was a great grief to him that he had been unable to obey Perdita's summons to Badfeld; but he had been wandering in Spain in pursuit of old Spanish specimens of bookbinding, and his estimate of his own importance was so very low that he seldom left his address. Jaques was obliged to return to England after a very few days at Fontainebleau, for all Andrew's affairs had long been under his superintendence, and they required his presence.

Perdita made friends with Miss Grey, a gentle delicate girl of rather a sentimental low-pitched tone of mind, that suited just now with Perdita's feelings; and they enjoyed long rambles in the forest, and sitting in their little garden in the warm air.

To every one's surprise, one day Jaques suddenly reappeared; he looked anxious and *distracted*, and demanded to see Mr. Lovel alone. The two girls went out into the garden, and Jaques sat down by the old man, who was somewhat tremulous and nervous, at the suddenness of his arrival.

Jaques with some solemnity unfolded a 'Times' which he took from his traveling-bag, and laying it on the table said—

"I believe this advertisement has reference to us."

Andrew took up the paper, but his hand shook.

"Read it, Jaques," he said; and Jaques read, while a choking feeling in his throat made his voice sound strange and harsh.

"Andrew Fairdon, once bookseller in Edgar Street, Soho, and Anne his wife, are requested to communicate with Messrs. Short, Browning & Short, of Lincoln's Inn. Circumstances relating to the birth of their adopted child will prove, on application to above, greatly to her advantage."

Jaques laid the paper down. Andrew covered his face with his hands.

"I am to lose the child," he said, in a weak, broken voice.

"No, nothing can take her love from you," said Jaques. "But this must be inquired into; it will remove all obstacles to her marriage."

"Obstacles!" exclaimed Andrew; "what do you mean? Of course it must be inquired into," he said, rather pettishly, "and I must be on the

spot to do it. I will go with you to London, Jaques."

"And leave the ladies here?"

"Yes; if Lady Norton will have Perdita, I will tell her, but I will not have the child disturbed; do you hear?"

"No," said Jaques, sadly; "she will know soon enough."

Accordingly, Mr. Lovel and Jaques set off by themselves, leaving Perdita greatly wondering and disturbed at their mysterious proceedings.

About a week passed, then Lady Norton told Perdita that she had heard from Mr. Lovel, and that she was going to take her and Miss Grey to London.

Perdita was bewildered, but she packed up her things, and with great regret they bade adieu to lovely, sunny Fontainebleau,—gave their last handful of bread to the old carp, and started homeward.

They had to leave Paris very early to catch the tidal train, and it was nearly seven o'clock before, dusty and weary, they reached their destination, Thomas's Hotel, in Berkeley Square.

Andrew and Jaques were there to receive them. Andrew looked far better and more animated. The necessity for exertion had done him good. He had secured a sitting-room for Perdita, and there, holding her hand, with tears in his eyes, told her that the papers had been found, and that the stain that during all these long years had rested on her mother's name was wiped away for ever.

"They claim you, my child," said Andrew, his voice faltering. "You are no longer all my own." Here he thoroughly broke down; but Dita, kneeling by his side, repeated over and over again that no name, no new relations, could ever make her love her adopted father less.

"How pleased mammie would have been!" she said, her tears overflowing when she thought of the dear one who had never let her want a mother's tenderest love.

Andrew told her all he knew—that the papers had been found in a secret drawer of a bureau that was originally in Ewan Macmonach's room, and it was generally supposed that he had placed them there for additional safety.

"Your uncle has behaved most handsomely, Perdita," he said. "His one wish and that of Lady Grisel his mother, is to see you in full possession of your own as soon as possible. Tomorrow he is coming here, anxious to have one interview with you before he leaves England. His wife's death has shattered him," said he, feelingly.

Perdita lay long awake that night, her mind in a whirl of thought.

The next morning she had scarcely finished breakfast before Angus Macmonach arrived.

"Your uncle, Perdita," said Andrew, rather pompously. And he left them alone together.

Angus was dressed in deep mourning, and his face was pale and haggard.

"You have been told?" he said, abruptly—and sitting down in front of Perdita, he pushed the damp hair back from his brow.

"Yes," she said gently: "and I am very glad. It is untold joy to know that I may honor my father's memory as I do my mother's; but," she added, putting out her hand, and touching his, "the money is nothing to me. I cannot bear that you should leave Dunmonaigh. I am grieved for you; and you have been so noble, so generous, in thus seeking me out."

"Hush!" he cried. "Stop! you do not know what you say." There was such a sound of acute pain in his voice that Perdita started: he suddenly bent forward,—“Can you keep a secret?” he said, hoarsely.

"Yes," she answered. He rose and walked thrice up and down, then suddenly flinging himself into a chair he began:—

"Ewan and I were nearly of an age, and people say that two such brothers are generally inseparable. It was never so with us; the nurses used to say, this child is his father's own, and this his mother's. Fortune plays strange tricks: if I had been the eldest, he the younger son, neither would have suffered as we did. My father never cared for me, my mother idolized me. Ewan would have loved me if I had willed it so; but I saw that I, the clever one, with better intellect and stronger powers, was hedged in, crushed on every side, for want of that wealth he valued so little. There are moments (and this is one) in which men speak their thoughts straight out. I knew myself to possess the stronger mind and intellect. I envied his rare beauty, his attractiveness, the influence he possessed over others, which in my hands

would have been a tower of strength, and in his was only a means of attaching personal love. I never tried to curb my jealousy, and it became the strongest passion of my life.

"Then came a day on which once more my hopes were raised. Do not shrink back! human nature is complex. I swear I did not desire my brother's death, but he was dying, and I did desire the power that would come to me.

"It was near, in my very hand; and, mark you, I was unjustly used by fortune. I was given faculties that I could never develop, hopes never to be fulfilled, visions never to be grasped. Good heavens! the bitterness of that moment is engraven on my brain! All shattered in a moment, I knew that I was again what I had been before—that that woman was my brother's wife, that child his lawful heir."

"You knew it?" Perdita recoiled from him.

"Listen; despise me as you will, but hear me to the end. It was night, my mother was asleep, not a creature stirring in the house, no human being shared the tumult of my soul, no prayer for me was going up to Heaven, and I had to fight the fight alone with a tempter who called to his aid every jealous thought, every devil that had triumphed in my soul since I had grown to hate my brother. I rose up and paced my room. It was a wonderful moonlit night—there was light for my purpose. I crossed the loch; the keys fitted; I took the papers from old Malcolm's care, and filled the packet with blank paper, sealed it with this, my brother's signet-ring, and home."



Perdita leant back in her chair, her face covered with her hands. He went on :—

“I never destroyed the papers, remember! I would not have done that.” The man’s warped nature always dwelt on this as on a merit; his voice became hoarse. “They came with their proofs, and I had to sit there, and see her heart break before my eyes; but I bore it,—I had strength then, it is gone now. And since I have seen you, I see again her haunting eyes, appealing first, then wild with a terrible despair. She went away,—hide your face; do not look at me,—she went away. I wrote to her, unknown to all. I sent her a hundred, then two hundred pounds. It never reached her, for before then she was dead; she died of a broken heart. If she had lived—I do not know—I might have righted her; but she died, leaving a nameless pauper child.”

Perdita sprang from her chair and stood looking at him with dilated eyes and panting breath. He breathed hard, and with a sudden change of voice went on :—

“Years passed, and I suppose that I must have half forgotten her, but I was not happy. Not in all my life have I been what the world calls happy. I have been haunted by the past; the reasonings of years never laid the specter of remorse, and when I had schooled my life to a calm and even level, now and then would come over me a cold nervous shiver, an agony of fear, and it was long before I was myself again. Years passed,—you know the rest.”

Perdita was trembling from head to foot.

"I had an idle dream that a young sweet wife would lull these thoughts to rest. I thought, believe me, I thought indeed that my brother's child was dead. I taught myself to be certain that it was so. I brought her home to Dunmonaigh, my little wife, and then I prayed. I asked God to let me love her, and let her sweet nature soften the cold hardness of my heart. I prayed, but I had not made restitution, and my prayer was denied!"

Perdita softly laid her hand upon his arm.

"You knew Mabel," he went on; "you knew what she was—how sweet, and young, and gay! You can recall her image, with her soft hair and her loving eyes. Who could see her and not love her! And yet I was hard and harsh to her. Too long self-suppressed, I dreaded emotion. I dared not give rein to any feeling, whether of joy or hope or love. I was cold to her. I did not even love her then, for a barrier seemed to keep us apart. She did not understand me, and I dreaded lest she should. I prayed then, but my prayer was denied."

He paused, panting, then went on:—

"Then—then, you know, she found those papers; and—oh God!—the discovery killed her. My mother uttered words that never will leave my memory—'First Assunta, now Mabel.' I was shooting on Benichon, and they bid me come home, and I was too late: not one word—not one. My God was a Nemesis. I have not known one moment's rest since my wife died."

Angus covered his face with his hands, and wept with the awful overwhelming grief of a

strong man crushed. Perdita, terrified and in sore trouble, knew not what to do, but gently stroked his knee.

Presently he raised his head, and took her hand in both of his. "I have but one hope in life now," he said, "and that is, that you, in their names and your own, will forgive me."

"I do—I forgive you, as I hope to be forgiven; and in my father's and my mother's names I pray to God to forgive you freely."

He pressed her hand to his lips, then rose up.

"Good-by," he said—"I am going abroad; perhaps I may never return again. You will take care of my mother, will you not?"

"I will indeed."

"And try to be to her what *she* was?"

"I will try."

He looked at her very wistfully. "Perdita," he said, "you loved Mabel; you knew her very well; tell me, was she very unhappy?"

Perdita could not speak, the tears rained down her cheeks. She had only had one little heart-broken note from Mabel, telling her that marriage was a sad and miserable thing. Angus looked at her fixedly.

"Do not answer me," he said, "only say good-by; I must go."

Once more he kissed her hand, and left the room.

Perdita sat down: she was utterly bewildered by all that had passed, and strove to collect her thoughts. Her whole mind being intent on the one subject, she did not hear a rapid foot cross

the room, and did not look up till Edward Norton stood before her. In one moment she was sobbing on his breast. All, all had passed away—this terrible story of guilt and sorrow and bereavement—and a new and boundless heaven of joy was opening before her. To her life's end Perdita Macmonach faithfully kept the unhappy Augus's secret.

The next morning Perdita was taken to Lady Armine's house to see Lady Grisel.

It was a very sad meeting at first; all the black dress and sad faces brought poor pretty Mabel vividly to Perdita's mind. In spite of the new bright joy that seemed to transform her, she could not suppress her tears when Lady Grisel took her in her arms and kissed her. Those tears won the lonely woman's heart at once. She had felt as if she could never love another fair young girl as she had loved her daughter-in-law. She felt almost jealous of a youth and beauty that might try to rival Mabel in her love. But she found not a rival but a fellow-mourner who had known Mabel, and whom Mabel had often spoken of as "so beautiful and so charming."

Then came a new sense of possession, for at once the mother's eye caught the strong resemblance to her handsome son. The fair brow, the curve of lip and chin—all brought Ewan to her mind so much, that it seemed as if she would never weary of tracing every line in Perdita's face.

Lady Grisel was anxious that the two weddings should be soon—before the winter came.

They must be very quiet, and take place in London.

The lawyers demanded at least six weeks to arrange Perdita's elaborate settlements; and when this was to be done, Andrew told his own views for the future. He absolutely refused to return to Salford. He said he could never bear the place without his wife, and he could only be thankful that now his duty need not compel him to go there. He would live in London with Jaques. The estate should be absolutely settled on Perdita and her husband.

On a cold brilliant day in the first days of November, all signs of mourning were put aside, and Margaret Griselda Macmonach and Mildred Grethard were married.

There were anxious loving prayers going up to God all day: smiles for the present, and tears for the past.

On Mabel's grave Angus had caused a stone of marble, white and pure as driven snow, to be placed, and on it, in small letters, carved—

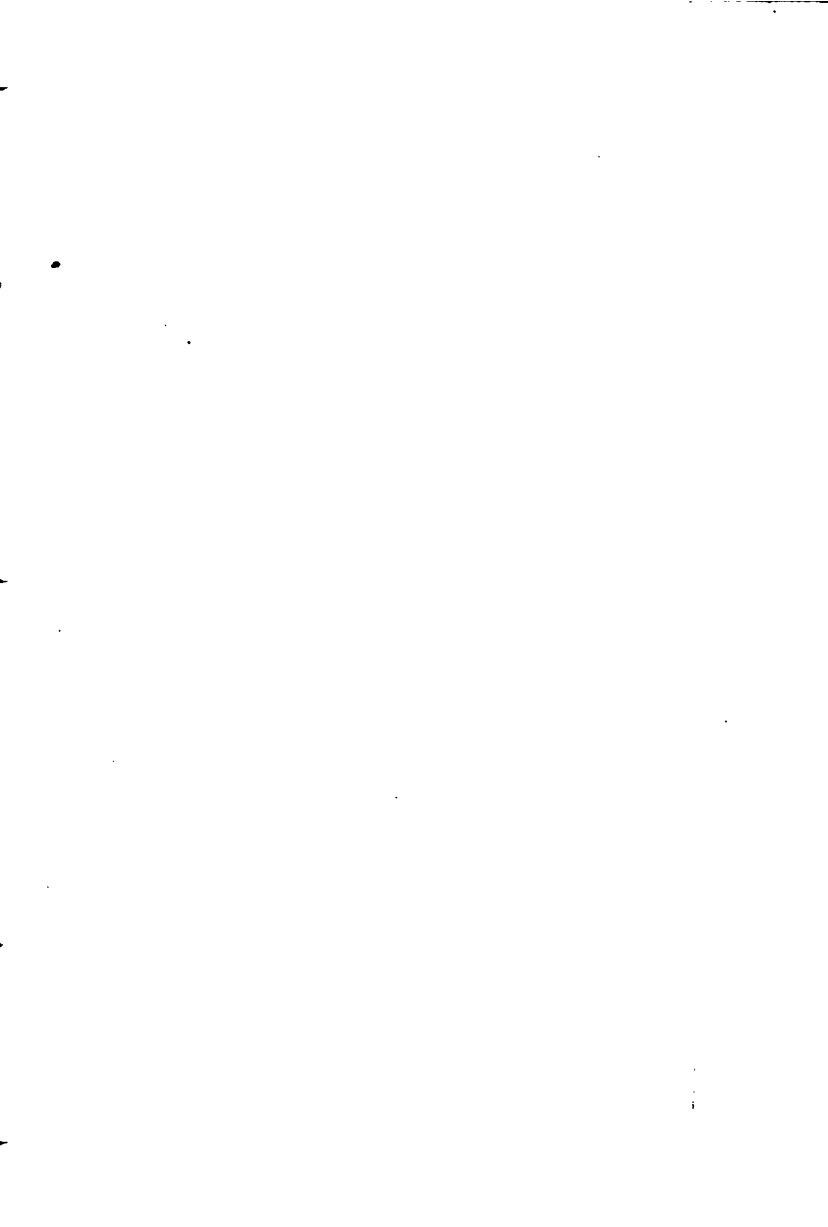
MABEL MACMONACH,

*Aged 20 years,*

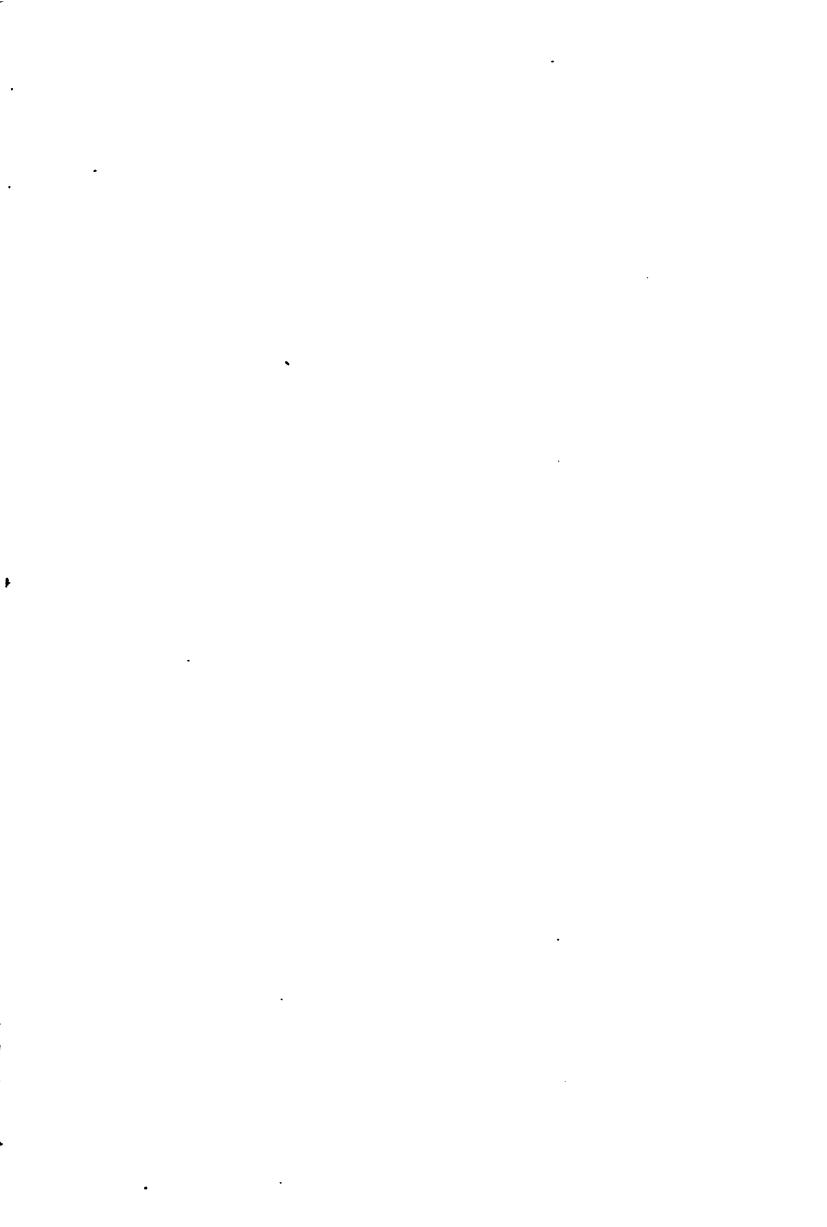
AND HER INFANT SON.

“Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him:  
but weep sore for him that goeth away; for he  
shall return no more, nor see his native country.”

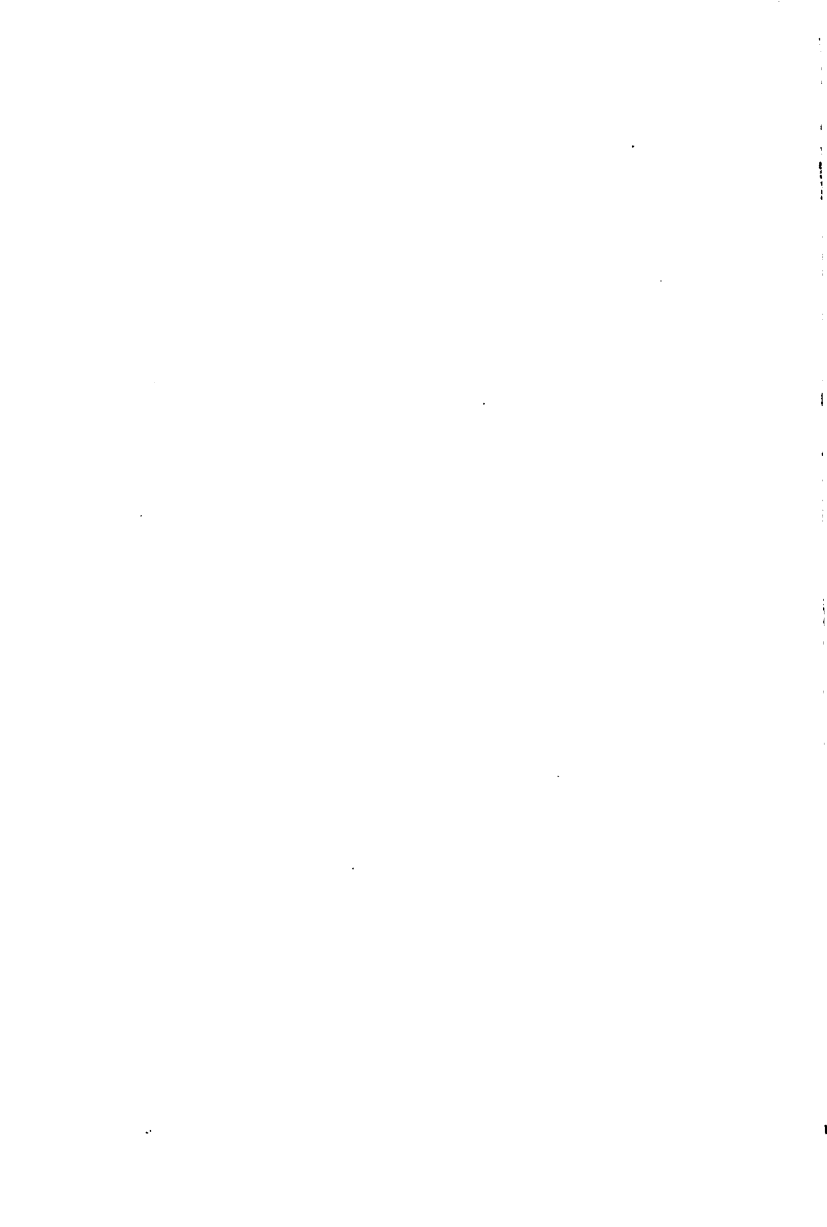
THE END.













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